

Butoh dance in the UK: an ethnographic performance investigation

Paola Esposito (2013)

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BUTOH DANCE IN THE UK:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC

PERFORMANCE INVESTIGATION

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Paola Esposito

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the social and cultural significance of butoh dance beyond its original context of postwar Japan. In order to do so, the thesis explores ideas, practices and experiences of butoh dancing among contemporary – Japanese as well as non-Japanese – practitioners: primarily the Oxford-based butoh dance company *Café Reason*, which constituted the main case study for the research.

The ethnographic particularities of butoh, as defined by its practitioners, provided the core of the investigation. That is, a common notion among teachers and students of this dance form is that butoh has no conclusive form or style. They also say that butoh is defined by its very defying of definitions. Thus, the central question that runs through the thesis is: ‘How does butoh, a dance that resists codification and classification, continue to be practised and reinvented?’

The central hypothesis of the thesis is that the core of butoh lies in its perceptual, rather than its formal, constitution and articulation. In order to test this hypothesis I engaged an unorthodox methodology that, by explicitly mobilizing sensory engagement in the processes of training and performing butoh, brought my own experience to the centre-stage of the analysis. In turn, the methodological focus on the senses unveiled the sophisticated aesthetic dimensions of butoh dancing, especially its reliance on tactile-kinesthetic perception.

Based on these methodological premises, a review of butoh training and performances allowed an approach to the semantic and perceptual ‘indeterminacy’ of the butoh body. The latter is typically associated with unintelligible levels of experience: in the form of either intense, and often ‘anti-social,’ emotional states, or augmented, near-religious, states of awareness. These findings led me to identify ‘emotion’ and ‘otherness’ as the core

experiential dimensions of butoh dancing, which, in turn, explains its continuity and significance as an art form.

Ultimately, butoh's synthesis of 'art' and 'spirituality,' or of 'dance' and 'therapy,' allows the analysis to situate this cultural phenomenon in a continuum between ritual and aesthetic performance, with different butoh dancers placing themselves at different positions within this spectrum.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

1.1 Plan of the thesis

1.1.1 Overview

This project is an anthropological study of butoh dance in the UK. It addresses the question of why butoh, an obscure avant-garde dance phenomenon in postwar Japan, has spread beyond its original context to become a global dance trend. In order to do so, the thesis explores butoh dancers' motivations to dance, their experiences of dancing, and the meanings attached to butoh aesthetics and practice in light of anthropological theories on dance, symbolism, and sensory engagement.

While the social significance of butoh has been examined in relation to Japan's postwar experience, the social and aesthetic territory of contemporary, non-Japanese butoh remains largely unexplored. To date, research on this art form has focused on the work of Japanese masters and on the historical context that first saw butoh's emergence, as I will describe in the second half of this chapter. Little or no attention has been directed towards the proliferation of butoh outside Japan since the 1980s, nor towards the openness and experimentation which remains at the core of the dance.

As the first anthropological study of butoh in the West, this thesis addresses this gap in the literature, based ethnographically in the practices and notions attached to butoh among a set of non-Japanese practitioners, the Oxford-based butoh company *Café Reason*. In describing themselves as a

‘community-based’ and ‘semi-professional’ butoh company, *Café Reason* provides a case for the impact of butoh beyond the channels of professional dance and performance, as a grassroots modality of creative engagement.

Having joined *Café Reason*’s weekly training in late 2007, by the end of 2009 I was considered a member of the company. While my investigation with and through this group takes advantage of my position as an insider, the double condition of being a researcher and dancer feeds back into my elaboration of the fieldwork, to produce a representation of butoh dance which constantly refers back to the experience – both physical and imaginative – of *doing* butoh. As such, my experience as a dancer is integral to my reflections on the significance of butoh today.

1.1.2 Research approach and focus

The point of departure of this project is an examination of the semantic indeterminacy of butoh dance vis-à-vis its qualification – as expressed in the literature and in the commonly-held notions of butoh practitioners – as a process of ‘de-socialisation’ of the body. Throughout the thesis, I maintain that this overlapping of ‘indeterminacy’ with ‘de-socialisation of the body’ is key to understanding the polymorphic, ever-changing nature of butoh and its enduring social significance.

I follow Roquet (2003) in his reading of the aesthetic order of butoh performance through the symbolic language of the ‘liminal,’ and extend his analysis to include the sensory and semantic configurations of the butoh body. Based on Csordas (1990), I hypothesize that the elaboration of butoh as ‘undefinable’ (and implicit in depictions of butoh as ‘mystic,’ ‘mysterious,’ or ‘ritualistic’) is to be understood in relation to the structure of perception that underlies the constitution of the butoh body as a cultural object. Via ethnographic investigation, I identify butoh dancers’ reliance on kinesthetic

imagery as the foundation of butoh's aesthetic and semantic (dis-)order, and its translation into metaphors of liminality, such as 'transition' or 'metamorphosis' (Turner 1974). I also hypothesise that the emotional resonance that butoh dance exercises on audiences and on some dancers is directly connected to the perceptual constitution of the butoh body.

The main argument concerning the 'liminal' as the core of butoh's significance is developed in this thesis along two main ethnographic trajectories, the sensory and the performative, which unfold according to the following plan.

In *Chapter Two* I spell out the theories which help me frame the study of butoh anthropologically. In addressing the question of butoh dance's socio-cultural significance, I mobilize discussion from the anthropology of dance. Based on Gell (1999), I propose that the significance of butoh is to be discovered in its movement. I depart from Gell, however, by arguing that it is the sensory perception of movement, rather than its symbolic meaning, that grants movement its significance. I call for an extension of Csordas' 'methodology of embodiment' to examine the butoh body as a perceptual and cultural object, via the fundamental criteria of 'perception' and 'practice' (Csordas 1990). Here I also draw a parallel between butoh dance and healing and possession rituals, based on their shared characteristic of 'semantic indeterminacy,' and their cultural thematization as 'other' (Csordas 1990). Whereas a crucial divergence between butoh and religious rituals is found in butoh's constitutional nature as a performing art, and especially in the dancer's conscious or quasi-conscious acquisition of 'techniques of the body,' an important similarity is found in the fact that both butoh and religious rituals draw from unintelligible levels of experience. I thus understand butoh as an expression as well as a condition of liminality (Turner 1969) and place it in a continuum between aesthetic and ritual performance (Schechner 1988). Finally, via a sensory and dance anthropology framework, I suggest that movement should also be seen as the grounds for elaborating a butoh identity by its dancers, and that a 'kinesthetic approach' can help identify the patterns of butoh (de-)socialisation and its contents.

Chapter Three introduces my fieldwork with the group *Café Reason*, and discusses issues of confidentiality and ethics encountered in the field. I also discuss my research approach and methodology. In particular, I address how to investigate butoh's semantic indeterminacy by means of a methodological paradigm of embodiment. From the anthropology of the senses I draw the idea that different cultural groups organize their senses in different ways – usually by privileging a particular sense over others – and that cultural knowledge can be accumulated and transmitted through shared sensory practices. I combine this idea with the notion, drawn from the anthropology of dance, that dance cultures are based on a prevailing kinesthetic sense, or sense of movement. Building on Sheets-Johnstone's work on kinesthesia (2009; 2011[1999]; 2011), I propose that butoh dancers may cultivate a distinctive type of kinesthetic awareness. Thus, I resolve to approach the sensory order of butoh from a kinesthetic point of view, as ethnographically grounded in my direct participation in dance and performance practice with *Café Reason*. I also outline modalities of data collection that were used to support and integrate the transitional nature of kinesthetic data, including note taking, drawing, and filming.

The main account of my fieldwork with *Café Reason* is divided into two parts. *Part I*, comprising Chapters Four through Six, concerns ethnographic information drawn from training contexts, namely, butoh classes and workshops; while *Part II*, comprising Chapters Seven and Eight, concerns ethnographic information drawn from dance performance contexts.

Within this two part framework, *Chapter Four* outlines the socio-sensory environment of a Friday evening *Café Reason* butoh class. It provides an overview of the two-hour butoh training session's format and contents, explored through its actions and interactions. Behavioral and sensory data are examined in light of theories from the anthropology of the senses that account for the patterning of sensory perception within the same culture (Ingold 2000; Stroeken 2008). The same theories are then used to make

explicit the high degree of variation in the perceptual configuration of the butoh body, as mediated by the language of training.

Chapter Five approaches the central notion of desocialisation of the human body in the discourses of butoh practitioners. In particular, it scrutinizes the potential contradictions between the notion of 'desocialisation' and the practice of butoh 'training.' I propose that the tensions between 'naturalness' and 'technique' are crucial to understanding the aesthetic and socio-cultural efficacy of the butoh body. By drawing on the literature on ritual and aesthetic performance, I investigate these tensions through a situated approach to butoh training with dancer Macarena Ortuzar and, in turn, with *Café Reason*.

Chapter Six investigates butoh training and imagery from the perspective of sensory organization. I draw attention to the processes by which butoh training language and imagery leads to temporary modifications of a dancer's ordinary sensory perception, mainly through an enhancing of kinesthetic attention, a process that I describe as the emergence of a 'butoh sensorium.' I elaborate the multi-faceted and multi-layered articulation of the butoh sensorium, as mediated by different types of imagery adopted in butoh training. In the second section, I describe the emotional resonance of butoh, based on two dancers' different approaches to emotion in butoh.

Part II reflects on the nature of butoh as a dance genre by investigating expressions and configurations of the butoh sensorium in performance. A core difference between training and performance contexts is identified in the fact that the latter includes the presence of an audience.

Part II opens with *Chapter Seven*, which addresses the socio-sensory constitution of the butoh body as a performative object. In particular, it examines perceptual and semantic configurations of the butoh body in relation to an audience via an analysis of selected performance exercises with dancer and choreographer Yael Karavan. This chapter further scrutinizes the idea

that performance practice allows for 'altered' modalities of perception, which are ultimately understood as perceptual configurations of liminality.

Chapter Eight examines the processes of objectification of butoh dance into a performative artifact. I draw attention to sensory and semantic configurations of butoh in performance as involving, or taking into account, the presence of an audience. I interpret butoh performances in light of performance 'paradigms' such as notions of aesthetic intensity, the incorporation of personal meaning in performance, the manipulation of time, and the use of physical and social setting

Chapter Nine revisits the anthropological problem that I posed at the beginning – the social significance of butoh dance outside Japan today. It outlines this work's main findings, and draws out their implications and conclusions.

In the remaining section of *Chapter One* I outline the origins of my involvement with this research topic, and reflect on the nature of butoh by examining its origins in Japan and its spread in the West.

1.2 Opening a hand

My interest in butoh begins with an image. It was a picture of a man in a black suit, with hands and face painted white. The silhouette stood out on a white background like ink strokes spread across rice paper. His right hand disappeared beneath the hat – a black dot hanging in mid-air. The man's unaffected posture and smile gave the impression that he – an actor, a dancer or, possibly, a mime – had been caught in a moment of relaxation. Still, his presence struck me as though he was 'expressing something.' His body language, whilst frozen in time, conveyed levity, play, rapture even. He appeared to be, simultaneously, aware of the camera, and elsewhere.

I found the picture in a textbook of theater studies, which belonged to my friend. I asked him whether he knew the man in the picture.

Friend: 'That's Kazuo Ohno,¹ a butoh dancer.'

I: 'What is *butoh*?'

F: 'Butoh is a dance form from Japan.'

He hesitated a moment, then continued:

'I attended a workshop led by Kazuo once. I remember an exercise that he taught us. It goes like this: you hold your hand tight in a fist, for about thirty seconds. Then, you begin to unfold your fingers very slowly, until your hand is wide open. It should take you about ten minutes to open the hand to its full extent.'

As he spoke he also demonstrated the exercise. I noticed the shape of his

¹ Names of Japanese individuals are listed given name first and surname second, according to Western practice.

hand as it slowly transgressed into a dozen micro-gestures: from the solid, compact outline of a fist into a slow surfacing of fingers – one by one, as though each of them was imbued with independent will – throughout the stretching of the palm, the straightening of the knuckles, and, finally, the reaching out of fingertips.

F: 'Try.'

It took me only a few seconds to perform the same chain of movements.

F: 'You are too fast. Pay attention to the tiniest muscle in your hand.'

I thought to myself:

'What would *pay attention to the tiniest muscle in the hand* even mean?'

After a couple of attempts, I gave it up.

I: 'What's the point of taking ten minutes to just open my hand, anyway?'

This episode has stayed in my mind through the years. About two years after, I made two short documentary films² in collaboration with butoh dancers and choreographers Marie-Gabrielle Rotie and Sayoko Onishi. The camera captured the dancers' evanescent movements on tape; then, in the editing suite, I played those movements over and over again, magnifying them, slowing them down, scrutinizing the visible qualities of their art. Yet, the *invisible* qualities kept eluding me.

In 2006, after taking some butoh classes at the London Butoh Network, I set

² These films were made for the Master in Visual Anthropology at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

off to Japan, where I trained at the *Ohno Kazuo Butoh School* in Yokohama for three months, and where I also took a workshop with the butoh company *DaiRakudaKan*. In London and in Japan I met many dancers and performers, professional and amateur, from a variety of different countries – the U.S., Russia, Europe, Mexico, Taiwan, and of course, Japan – who were also studying butoh.

I began seeing myself as part of much larger community of butoh workshop-goers and practitioners, and wondered what was it about this largely obscure art form (as an example, most Japanese people do not know what butoh is) that attracted so many people – experienced performers as well as those who, like me, were virtually illiterate in dance and performance work. When I returned to the UK from Japan, I applied for a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology in order to research the significance of butoh dance today.

1.3 A short history of butoh

1.3.1 What is butoh?

Butoh (aka Butō) is an eclectic dance form that emerged in Japan in the 1960s. It is associated to the work of dancers and choreographers Tatsumi Hijikata (1928–1986) and Kazuo Ohno (1906–2010). Both individually and in collaboration, Hijikata and Ohno created a dance form that subverted existing categories and shocked their contemporaries. The characteristic of butoh that is generally accepted to be unique is its absence of a definite form; also the fact that it usually draws its expressive force from internalized imagery. To most, it is known as a dance of metamorphosis, dealing with the unknown and the unspeakable.

Hijikata gave the dance the name *ankoku butoh*, which is usually translated as

‘Dance of Utter Darkness.’ The word ‘*ankoku*’ (暗黒) literally means ‘dark black’ which is commonly translated as ‘pitch black’ or ‘utter darkness’ (Kasai personal conversation, 2009). The word *butoh* is composed by the character ‘*bu*’ [舞] – a character also found in *kabuki* [歌舞伎] (Klein 1988, p. 2) – meaning ‘to flutter’ or ‘to dance,’ and by the character ‘*to*’ [踏], meaning ‘to step’ or ‘to tread’ (Kasai, personal conversation). Before *ankoku butoh* was invented, the word *butoh* was commonly used in Japan to refer to competitive ballroom dancing, also called *kyogi butoh* (‘*kyo*’ [競], ‘competition,’ and *gi* [技], ‘technique’) (Kasai, ibidem). The ‘darkness,’ in ‘*ankoku butoh*,’ refers to the territories of violence, eroticism and deviance that were initially explored by the dance. It also refers to the fact that *butoh* dancers aimed at retrieving the body’s ‘unconscious.’ Nowadays, the term *ankoku* has mostly been dropped, while *butoh* has come to indicate the whole spectrum of dance and performance that, in one way or another, has been influenced by the style invented by Hijikata and Ohno (Klein 1988, p. 52).

1.3.2 Japan’s postwar landscape and the arts

The emergence of *butoh* is generally associated with the early postwar period in Japanese history: psychic chaos after the war, economic and ideological crisis and, at a moment when Western values of ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ were on the rise, the radical alteration of Japanese political institutions. In 1960, the question of the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty

(*Nichi-Bei anzen hoshō jōyaku*; also known as *Anpo*)³ threw the nation into turmoil. For months, anti-war debates and demonstrations inflamed the public opinion, converging into 'the most creative outburst of anarchistic, subversive and riotous tendencies in the history of modern Japan' (Munroe 1994, p. 149). On June 15, the day that the treaty was to be passed, a vast demonstration gathered around the Diet (Goodman 1988; Munroe 1994, p. 398). Despite the protests, leading to clashes between the protesters and the riot police, the renewal was automatically ratified on 19 June 1960 (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 10; Munroe 1994, p. 398). Goodman argues that the Security Treaty crisis contributed to reviving and exacerbating among the Japanese that sense of 'helplessness' and 'meaninglessness' that had been the legacy of the war (Goodman 1988, pp. 19–20). It is against this tumultuous background that the emergence of *butoh* is to be understood: while not inherently political, *butoh* has been identified as one of the most radical cultural expressions of the widespread sense of disorientation which marked the postwar period, and of the deeply felt call for renewal and re-invention (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988).

Jean Viala and Nourit Masson-Sekine, authors of the first comprehensive study of *butoh* in English, sketch the Japanese society of the 1960s as 'torn between the obsession with "progress" and refuge into nostalgia' (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 11). The latter took the form of a new wave of

³ 'In September 1951, Japan and the United States signed two treaties: the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The Security Treaty was easily ratified in Japan which was still under American Occupation; both treaties took effect in April 1952. The Peace Treaty, which had also been signed by other countries, ended the postwar Occupation of Japan by the U.S., and allowed Japan to reenter the international community as an independent country. The Security Treaty, nonetheless, allowed the U.S. to continue to station troops in Japan in a controlled manner: In the face of the volatile situation in China and the Korean Peninsula, Japan virtually became an American military base on the East Asian front of the Cold War during the fifties' (Munroe 1994, p. 397).

folklore that, inspired by anthropologist Yanagida Kunio's (1875-1962) studies of Japanese rural culture, rituals and oral traditions, led to a revival of Japanese 'traditional' literary styles (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, *ibidem*). In parallel with the escape into the past, a radical experimental mood swept across the arts (Goodman 1988; Moore 2006), drawing on the ideas and practices of the Western avant-gardes – Futurism, Constructivism, Dadaism, and Surrealism (Munroe 1994, p. 22) – and from the musical works of John Cage (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 12). The adoption of radical theories and practices did not coincide with a mere emulation of the West, however: the emotional and psychic ferment of the period called for a modern reformulation of 'Japanese identity,' without succumbing to an acritical emulation of foreign models.

A ... prewar avant-garde premise that has also informed the post-war movement is autonomy from the hegemony of Euro-American modernism. Often misconstrued as anti-Westernism, this critique suggests rather a resistance to the outright adoption of Euro-American culture, and advocates that Japanese art recognize and construct its own distinct modernity (Munroe 1994, p. 22).

Whilst embracing the Western modernist paradigms of freedom and individualism, advocating 'the destruction of traditional orthodoxy to create radically new culture' (Munroe 1994, p.19), the Japanese way to modernity turned back to vernacular roots, not as a form of atavism, but as a way to appropriate the past in order to transcend it (*ibidem*). The literature, photography, cinema, and theatre of those years reflected this compelling tension, and 'resonated with a sense of violent exploration, grim introspection, aggressive, erotic action and a desperate search for identity and continuity' (*ibidem*, p. 46).

It is in this atmosphere ripe with a desire for subversion and renewal on the one hand, and for search of 'identity' on the other, that the new avant-garde dance form 'butoh' emerged (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988; Munroe 1994; Kurihara 1996; Moore 2006).

1.3.3 Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, fathers of butoh

Both Hijikata and Ohno were born and grew up in Northern Japan and knew great poverty (Klein 1988, p. 5). Tatsumi Hijikata was born Kunio Yoneyama in a farming village in Akita Prefecture, Tohoku, in 1928; he was the youngest of eleven children (ibidem, p. 6). His parents were farmers who owned a noodle shop (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 19). An older sister to whom Hijikata was particularly attached was sold into prostitution, a common practice in economically depressed villages at that time (Klein 1988, pp. 5–6). All his brothers went to war and never came back.

Before they left, my father let them drink sake from special sake cups and sent them off saying, “Do a good job and come back!” After the sake, all their faces turned bright red ... serious young men, my brothers were! But when they came back, they were ashes in mortuary urns. They turned bright red when they left, and turned to ashes when they came back (Hijikata 1987, p. 126).

Kazuo Ohno was born in the fishing village of Hakodate, in Hokkaido, in 1906. A port city, Hakodate was more open to external cultural influences than rural Akita. Ohno became acquainted with foreign culture since his youth, thanks to his mother’s love for Western classical music, French cooking and literature (Ohno, in Ohno and Schechner 1986, p. 164). In 1938 Ohno was conscripted for military service: he served as a soldier for nine years, the last two as a prisoner of war in Papua New Guinea. Out of the eight thousand prisoners, he was among the two thousand who survived (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 25). Ohno rarely used to talk about the war, except in his dance workshops, when he sometimes spoke of how ‘many people die in wars to serve the living’ (ibidem).⁴

⁴ Like Hijikata, who believes that his older sister inhabited his body, Ohno says: ‘I carry all the dead with me’ (Ohno, quoted in Fraleigh 1999, p. 57).

Both Hijikata and Ohno went through significant training in German modern dance, also known as *Neue Tanz* or Expressionist dance. In Germany, Expressionism in dance emerged through the work of dancers like Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, and Harald Kreutzberg (Fraleigh 2010, p. 21). In Japan the dancers Kosaku Yamada (who studied in Germany), Baku Ishii, and Takaya Eguchi (a student of Mary Wigman) pioneered the new style and the creative potential it entailed: 'From modern dance came the idea that dance could be a creative interaction between form and content which might convey the spirit of the times, as opposed to an interpretation of the existing forms used in traditional dance, or the expression of a gestural vocabulary as used in classical ballet' (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 16).

Ohno studied Expressionist dance first with Ishii, and later with Eguchi. Hijikata studied with Katsuko Masamura and then with Mitsuki Ando, who had in turn trained under Eguchi (Fraleigh 2010, pp. 21–22). Ohno and Hijikata met through Ando in Tokyo, between 1952 and 1954 (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 22; Fraleigh 2010, p. 21). Stimulated by the new possibilities for 'creation' opened by the foreign approach to dance, they explored such possibilities without turning away from their cultural heritage: on the contrary, they strove 'to create a dance which would draw its strength from their country's culture and be representative of the contradictions and impulses of the times' (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, pp. 16–17).

Besides the dance training, life events seem to have had a determinant influence on Hijikata's and Ohno's dance careers. For Hijikata, for instance, growing up in peripheral Tohoku had a special significance for the development of his dance. In a speech entitled *Kazedaruma*, given at the 1985 *Tokyo Butoh Festival*, Hijikata draws a special link between his dance and rural Japan and sketches episodes of his childhood that he believes had an impact on the consequent development of butoh. In a passage of *Kazedaruma*, Hijikata tells of farmers who went to work in the fields and brought small children along in baskets called *izume*. Sometimes four or five children would be crammed in the basket and left alone in the middle of the

field while their parents went off to work.

Inevitably one of them in the middle of the heap would have an “accident” and get a diaper rash all over his lower torso. Not able to move because he’s crammed in with other kids and a bunch of other things and unable to do anything to ease his distress, the kid cries. But no matter how hard he cries, his mother ignores him. It’s hard for the grown-ups too. They’re working overtime and the work is back-breaking hard labour. They can’t let up. Meanwhile, the kid’s screaming as loud as ever but his cries are getting drowned by the roar of the wind in the damp and wide-open air. His cries are no longer being heard by the grown-ups. His throat is getting swollen, his eyes dim. Finally, he passes out. While he drifts in and out of consciousness, he realizes that crying is useless. His eyes refuse to surface from the pool of tears; his eyes and tears dry up on his cheeks. The child is torn and consumed by all of this. He is torn and consumed by the darkness. [...] He has to learn to amuse himself with his own body as a toy and to learn to tear and consume the darkness (Hijikata 1987, p. 127).

Hijikata also associated the origins of his dance with the mud: ‘... my dancing originated in a place that has no affinity with Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. I am absolutely certain of that. I’m well aware of the fact that my present movements are built upon that particular foundation—I was born from the mud and sod’ (ibidem, p. 125).

For Ohno as well, dance stems from the depths of life, as exemplified by his memories of ‘dancing’ inside his mother’s womb: ‘I learned Butoh inside my mother’s womb.... All dancing and all the arts come from this source’ (Ohno, quoted in Fraleigh 1999, p. 61). Kazuo’s ‘memories of the womb’ influenced his creative processes. In an interview with theatre director and performance scholar Richard Schechner, Ohno says: ‘My mother was my [first] director. She was the one I thought about. The movement motifs of *My Mother* came from what I thought I was doing in my mother’s womb. I was in her – what

was I doing there?’ (Ohno and Schechner 1986, p. 164). Another major influence in Ohno’s dance came from seeing, in 1928, a performance by Spanish dancer Antonia Mercé, known as *La Argentina*.⁵ ‘When I saw her dance, I understood it as the Creation of the world. I thought she was eager to absorb life. Even though the dance was about the Creation, she was part of life. I learned from her to live every day to its fullest. She is my teacher’ (Ohno and Schechner, *ibidem*, p. 164). Later in life, Kazuo dedicated to *La Argentina* one of his most celebrated performances, *La Argentina Sho* (Admiring *La Argentina*). Kazuo’s conversion to Christianity also seems to have played a role in his dance, informing it with recurring themes of life, death, and rebirth (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 25). The interconnection of life and dance are a reoccurring theme in Ohno’s thought. For him, both dance and life cannot be expressed simply through words: ‘The scars on your body will scab over and heal in time. As for the scars on your mind, if you accept and endure them, the experiences will bring you both pleasure and sorrow in time. Eventually, you will attain a world of poetry that can be expressed only through your body, not by words’ (Ohno 1986, p. 156).

For both Hijikata and Ohno, dance was imbued with existential significance: they considered it a medium that allowed them to convey what words fail to express. As Viala and Masson-Sekine put it:

[Hijikata and Ohno] thought of dance as an intense way of existing, rather than as a vehicle for a message or simply the organization of space. They did not want to speak through the body, but instead to let the body speak for itself, to disclose truth, to reveal itself in all its authenticity and depth, rejecting the superficiality of everyday life (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 77).

Nevertheless, Hijikata and Ohno had very different approaches to dance,

⁵ On the significance of the ‘encounter’ with *La Argentina* in Ohno’s life see also Ohno 1986, pp. 159–160.

which has often been associated with their different personalities. While Ohno's dance was surrounded by an aura of 'spirituality,' which was also informed by his being a Christian, Hijikata's work drew from the 'gutter' of society: thieves, beggars, and prostitutes were often the subject of his dance pieces. Hijikata has also been described as a voracious reader of French literature, especially of Genet, from whom he might have absorbed an appreciation for an intrinsically subversive world of 'inverted values' (Kurihara 1996, pp. 35–40).

Because of their distinctive temperaments, Hijikata and Ohno are often contrasted to each other: in the language of a *butoh* cosmology, Ohno is the light⁶ of *butoh*, while Hijikata the dark.⁷ In Viala and Masson-Sekine Ohno is

⁶ This notion seems to originate from the two dancers themselves. Klein (1988), in reporting an interview with Ohno on 25 November 1985, writes: 'Ohno himself has said that the creative energy that produced *Ankoku Butō* was the outcome of the collaboration of two men with personalities on the extreme ends of the spectrum; Ohno sees himself as the light, Hijikata as the dark, both poles of which were necessary to create the energy that is *Butō*' (ibidem, p. 6). For further discussion on the opposition between Hijikata and Ohno, see Fraleigh (2010, pp. 81–101).

⁷ On Hijikata's predilection for the darkness, see the following excerpt from his conversation with writer and art critic Shibusawa: 'A dancer must be able to relate to, for example, a frozen bone that transcends gender. Getting to that point, however, demands exhaustive examination, and without it the work will lapse into a trendy pseudo-darkness. ... Underground art turns into mere trendiness not because of external factors but because of the people who practice it. They create a desert around themselves, then complain there is no water. Why don't they try drinking from the wells within their own bodies? They should instead drop a ladder deep into their own bodies and climb down it. Let them pluck the darkness from within their own bodies and eat it. But they always seek resolution from outside themselves. ... I think things eaten in the dark taste good. Even now I eat sweets in bed in the dark, I can't see what they look like, but I know they taste twice as good. Light, in general, sometimes seems indecent to me' (Hijikata and Shibusawa 2000, pp. 51-52).

seen as the 'soul' of butoh, and Hijikata as the 'architect' (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988), while Fraleigh and Nakamura define them as 'two opposites of a yin/yang magnetic polarity' (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 24).

1.3.4 Butoh meets the 'West'

Hijikata and Ohno's 'dance of darkness' proliferated for many years as an underground movement in Japan. With the migrations of expatriating or touring Japanese performers and teachers, after Hijikata's death in 1986 and throughout the 1980s, butoh began to gain recognition in mainstream dance and theatre settings in the West.

While Hijikata never left Japan, Ohno became 'butoh's first ambassador abroad' (Fraleigh 2010, p. 95). The first major introduction to butoh for an international audience was in 1980, with Ohno presenting his solo *La Argentina Sho (Admiring La Argentina)* and the company Sankai Juku performing at the *14th International Theater Festival* in Nancy, France (Klein 1988, p. 69; Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 34). In 1982, Ohno appeared with the company DaiRakudaKan at the *Avignon Festival* and, in 1983, Hijikata's group participated in the European 'Six Country Festival' (Klein, *ibidem*, p. 69). In the U.S. butoh first appeared in 1981, with Min Tanaka's performances and workshops in New York; it was followed by DaiRakudaKan's show in Durham, North Carolina, in 1982. In 1984, Sankai Juku made their North American debut at the *Toronto International Festival* and the *Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival*, subsequently touring extensively in North America and Canada (Stein 1986, pp. 111-112; Roquet 2003, p. 45). The initial impact of this new dance form on Western audiences was shock: butoh dancers typically used white body make-up, shaved heads and ragged costumes; they adopted crouching postures, and performed excruciatingly slow movements, as well as mask-like grimaces and facial expressions that conveyed extreme emotions. Their radical view of dance showed no concern

for conventional Western notions of beauty, tending towards the grotesque instead (Stein 1986; Klein 1988). Yet, both in Europe and America, Japanese *butoh* dancers soon achieved great popularity. Stein (1986) has explained the impact of *butoh* on Western audiences of the 1980s as part of the 'Asian Boom' in postmodern dance and culture in general (*ibidem*, pp. 111-112). She suggests that, besides the novelty brought by the exotic spectacle, it was *butoh*'s emphasis on emotional expression, its 'honesty' and the fact that it was so physically demanding, that exercised a powerful impression on Western audiences (*ibidem*, p. 114).

The work of these Japanese artists is so thorough and so "Japanese" that Westerners sense a searing honesty. People rarely question the validity of *butoh*; they accept both the grotesque and the lyrical images. Because *butoh* is so obviously demanding, spectators who may not like it—who may even feel uncomfortable confronting such intensity—still respect the experimentation and the performance skills required. Artists who devote their lives to *butoh* are not unlike *noh* performers: their lives are rooted in their art. And it is this passionate, focused attention that Westerners respond to. Audiences are drawn in by the direct and raw emotions' (Stein 1986, pp. 112-113).

At the beginning, Western critics lacked any frame of reference to interpret the new dance form. The understanding of Japanese culture, and especially of Japanese dance, was filtered through a series of clichés (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 16) and the categories of what was known in modern dance at that time did not seem to apply to *butoh* (Klein 1988). Thus, articles appearing in newspapers and dance magazines of those years often depict *butoh* performances as strange and mysterious, for instance through the use of adjectives such as 'ritualistic,' 'arcane' or 'trance-like' (Roquet 2003, p. 14). In the early 1980s, North American reviews of *butoh* performances use expressions such as 'hallucinatory,' 'painful,' 'destructive,' 'insane,' and 'dislocating' (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 76). Some Western critics

attempted to describe butoh by comparing the use of white body paint, the extremely slow movement, or the exaggerated expressions to the theatre forms of Noh and Kabuki, even though most butoh dancers never studied those forms (Stein 1986, p. 111).

In Japan, the art form started gaining wider recognition only after the growing popularity in the West. Stein acknowledges this as an example of *gyaku-yunyu* – ‘go out and come back’ – meaning that Japanese artists are given credence in Japan after they have achieved popularity abroad (Stein 1986, p. 114). While the 1985 *Tokyo Butoh Festival* introduced butoh to the mainstream, Japanese newspapers and dance magazines over four decades (1961-2003) depicted butoh performances using adjectives such as ‘*angura*’ (underground), ‘*konton*’ (chaotic), ‘*shinpiteki*’ (mysterious) or ‘*anaakii*’ (anarchistic) (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 76).

Due to its relatively late recognition, literature on butoh both in Japanese and in English was virtually non-existent until the mid-1980s, with the exception of short performance reviews scattered among theatre and dance journals (Klein 1988, p. 3). Early works on butoh in the English language tried to remedy the misperceptions of butoh by focusing on the Japanese post-war landscape and the climate of rebellion and restlessness in which butoh first emerged. While placing butoh in its original cultural context, tracing its history, and pointing out its essential characteristics (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 16), these early works do not account for the spread of butoh beyond the historical contingencies and socio-cultural reality that first gave rise to it.

1.3.5 Japanese or universal?

As butoh began to be seen outside Japan, it started to attract an increasing number of non-Japanese practitioners. For these, a crucial question remained whether butoh was exclusively 'Japanese' or whether it could be a cross-cultural art form. This dilemma originated from the fact that butoh resonated with the historical and cultural 'specificity' of the postwar Japanese landscape; one expression of this specificity was Hijikata's aspiration to return to the 'original body' and to create a dance that would take as a point of reference his childhood memories of the native Tohoku. Yet, Hijikata himself referred to Tohoku more as an imagined place beyond space and time than an actual geographical place. Once, for instance, he said: '... there is a Tohoku in England. The utter darkness exists throughout the world, doesn't it?' (Hijikata, quoted in Kurihara 2000, p. 21).

In August 1995, the first '*EX...IT*' festival was held in Schloss Bröllin, Germany.⁸ This was a two-week gathering of eighteen choreographers, dancers, musicians and fine artists who exchanged their work and, along with about thirty workshop participants, explored the question: 'What is butoh in Europe?' Butoh dancer Toshiharu Kasai says that only Western participants were invited to the first '*Ex...IT*' because their aim was to find out whether there could be such a thing as 'Western butoh' (Kasai, personal communication). Kasai suggests that the preoccupation with butoh's 'cultural identity' could be seen as a reaction to a tendency, among some Japanese, to claim that Westerners cannot dance butoh, because of the shape of their bodies: 'For instance, [these Japanese people would argue that] Americans have long legs so they cannot squat. Therefore, they cannot dance butoh' (Kasai, personal communication).

⁸ *Ex...IT* has since 1995 become a regular event, held every four years at Schloss Bröllin, Germany (<http://www.exit.broellin.de/eX11/e-idea.html>, accessed on January, 20th 2011).

Ray Baskerville, from England, founder of *Butoh Kinoko*, the first organization aimed at providing butoh training and information on butoh dance in the UK, was a participant in 1995 'Ex.../IT' festival. In relation to the issue of butoh's 'identity,' he notes:

While it may have been stated that an intent of *Ex.../IT* was to explore butoh beyond the specificity of Japanese culture, I personally disagree with a need to even do this. In my opinion it boils down to our internal relationship with the unquantifiable question of 'what is butoh?' My own internal experience of that question does not define butoh within the parameters of any one culture, but in a deeper and common experience of 'humanness'. The cultural aspects of butoh's expression are peripheral and superficial. ... What was glaringly apparent at *Ex.../IT* was the divide between European artists who had lived/studied in Japan and those who had not. Those who had, it appeared to me fell easily in the trap of defining butoh in the image of their own teacher/training and held an attitude of superiority to those who did not have 'lineage' (Baskerville, questionnaire answer).

Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, a Welsh/Italian dancer, founder of *Butoh UK* – an organization that replaced *Butoh Kinoko* in 1997, under the name of *London Butoh Network* – expresses a similar view with regard to the cultural connotation of butoh:

My understanding of how to deal with that is: it is very important to credit that butoh arose in Japan, as named phenomena, historically, and that the two founders *are* Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno. So, butoh has Japanese historical origins. However, the influences that went into the creation of butoh, I would say, went beyond the specificity of Japanese culture; [for instance,] extremely strong influences came from outside Japan, particularly from German Expressionism. I think that butoh has a kind of Japanese origin historically, but when I think of it *now*... I would

describe it as a trans-cultural art practice, originating in Japan but erasing the need for cultural specificities as such in terms of its definition. The cultural specificities lie in the individual history and body of each person that encounters butoh. So in that sense it goes beyond any notion of being 'Japanese' in its essence. And I think, one can't be essentialist about it; it's something that's always shifting and moving (Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, personal conversation).

While Toshiharu Kasai claims that 'butoh is dead' – by which he means that the original, subversive and iconoclastic butoh of Hijikata no longer exists – (Kasai, personal conversation), Sayoko Onishi, a Japanese dancer based in Italy, teaches 'New Butoh,' that is, 'butoh as it is done by Westerners but also by Japanese who have come in contact with the West' (Onishi, personal conversation). For Onishi, the encounter between Westerners and Japanese through butoh is fertile. She notes that 'Western students are usually more individual, more autonomous and, certainly, more self-centred than Japanese and [that] this reflects in their style of butoh. This [being self-centred] is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, Japanese students often lack of this "individual" character. Somehow, I think that "New Butoh" could be a way to meet halfway, to create a new attitude that is "individual" without being "self-centred"' (Onishi, paraphrasing a personal conversation).

While Hijikata and Ohno are still the main references for contemporary butoh dancers, it cannot be ignored that a new era of the dance form, beyond the Japanese cultural framework, has begun. Since the mid-1980s butoh has attracted practitioners from all over the world, reaching new audiences and growing into a 'mainstream avant-garde' (Leims 2010). Although its influence has expanded, butoh has never crystallized into a specific form or style, nor has it maintained its original 'dark' character. Instead, it has developed in multiple performative directions and strategies, from the stage to the screen,

involving a wide-range of thematic and aesthetic solutions.⁹ Such eclecticism – and the difficulty of categorization that accompanies it – has made some scholars wonder whether there is such a thing as ‘butoh’ at all (Roquet 2003, p. 7), while others have resorted to figurative language, describing contemporary butoh, for instance, as ‘metamorphic dance’ in a process of ‘global alchemy’ (Fraleigh 2010).

In this chapter I have outlined the plan of the thesis and examined historically the rise in Japan and the spread of butoh globally. In the next chapter I will turn to the core theoretical problems attached to butoh, and propose an anthropological approach to solve them.

⁹ The influence that butoh has on contemporary culture is as widespread as it is difficult to circumscribe. Examples of the influence of butoh aesthetics on popular culture include the Japanese horror movie *Ringu* (1998), and particularly the character of Sadako’s ghost. Ozawa (2006) draws a direct link between Sadako’s way of moving and butoh’s attempt to recuperate the ‘animalness’ in human beings. Such ‘animalness’ is, according to Ozawa, the kernel of the fear that the film attempts to create in the Japanese audience: ‘the origin of the terror owes much to [Sadako’s] bodily movement, the grotesqueness in her way of crawling into the room’ (ibidem, p. 4). The music video for *Nothing Really Matters* (2006, director Johan Renk) by American pop-singer/song-writer *Madonna* and the music video for ‘*House*’ (2011, director Prano Bailey Bond) by the British indie-pop group *Cool Fun*, also contain references to butoh aesthetics. The 2008 German film *Cherry Blossoms* (original title *Kirschblüten–Hanami*, director Doris Dörrie), revolving around the story of a German couple and their discovery of ‘Japanese’ butoh, is probably one of the best examples of ‘Western’ representations of butoh dance.

CHAPTER TWO

2 Steps to an anthropological study of butoh dance

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the problem of butoh's socio-cultural significance by mobilizing theories from the anthropology of dance, anthropology of ritual, anthropology of the senses, and performance studies.

Following Gell (1999), I identify movement as the core of the relationship between dance and society. Yet, I depart from Gell in contending that it is the sensory perception of movement, rather than its symbolic meaning, that grants butoh its significance. Based on the notion that 'indeterminacy' is butoh's most fundamental feature (Roquet 2003), the socio-cultural significance of the dance is sought not in its formal, but in its processual dimensions.

As the tensions between form and process remain critical to butoh, this chapter adopts theories of liminality (Turner 1969), embodiment (Csordas 1990), and habitus (Bourdieu 1977) to explore such tensions. Meanwhile, anthropology of the senses approaches account for butoh training as a form of sensory enculturation, and performance studies theories frame the question of artistic agency within such enculturation.

2.1.1 'Indeterminacy' as liminality in butoh

Despite the centrality of movement in culture, anthropologists have often relegated dance to the domain of 'art,' thus considering dance a mere reflection, rather than an integral part, of social and cultural processes

(Kaeppler 1978, p. 45). For Kaeppler, the Western approach to dance tends to disconnect its aesthetic side from the field of social action in which it is embedded, to the point that the very notion of 'dance as art' can become an obstacle to studying the significance of movement in human societies (ibidem, p. 47). In a similar vein, Spencer (1985) maintains that approaching dance separately from 'society' is counterproductive to understanding the nature of dance as a social phenomenon. He argues that: 'Dance is not an entity in itself, but belongs rightfully to the wider analysis of ritual action, and it is in this context that one can approach it analytically and grant it the attention it demands' (ibidem, p. 38).

To Grau (1993), the nature of dance as a structured system of movement is the starting point to shed light on the fundamental relationship between dance and society. Such a relationship also defines the need for an anthropology of dance: 'Anthropologists are interested in socially-constructed movement systems, the activities that generate them, how and by whom they are judged, and how they can assist in understanding society' (ibidem, p. 21). A similar concern for clarifying the relationship between dance and society informs Alfred Gell's study of the dances of the Umeda people of Papua New Guinea (Gell 1999). Movement is the focal point of Gell's discussion on the relationship between dance and nondance. To him, dance appropriates and modifies the motor patterns of everyday living and transforms those patterns. Hence, he sees Umeda dance as 'a stylized deformation of nondance mobility, just as poetry is a deformation or modulation of language, a deviation from the norm of expression that enhances expressiveness' (ibidem, p. 156). Gell reports the case of female dances, which recall the walking techniques women adopt in their daily labour. In this respect, 'female dancing is not a separate sphere of motor behavior, but the occasion for realizing, to the fullest extent, certain potentialities that are already present in female gait' (ibidem, p. 149).

Gell, however, is not satisfied with the notion that dance alters habitual motor patterns. In order to explain the social significance of this alteration he separates movement, or 'style,' from the notion of its 'meaning.' Thus, while the 'style' of Umeda dances deviates from the nondance world, its 'meaning' refers back to it (p. 155). That is, as Gell understands it, the meaning of the dances is not found within the activity of dancing *per se*, but is located outside of it, at the level of Umeda social structure.

Dance seems to separate itself from nondance by its atypicality, its nonnormal, nonmundane character, but dance acquires its meaning by referring us back always to the world of mundane actions, to what these performers would be doing, were they doing anything but dance. ... Dance escapes from nondance only to return to it in the course of symbolically transforming it, and dance analysis can only succeed by following this double movement, back and forth (Gell 1999, p. 143).

Why should this transformation be symbolic, rather than actual? By removing the meaning of dance from the activity of dancing, and locating it in the realm of mundane, non-dance activity, Gell reiterates a common intellectual tendency to look for the meaning of an aesthetic expression outside of the expression itself (Langer 1957, pp. 204-209). According to the same perspective, a particular 'style' of movement in dance is no more than a mirror – albeit, in this case, a distorting one – 'in which people can see reflected the fundamentals of their own culture' (Ingold 2000, p. 347). That is, the significance or meaning of dance lies in the social structures from which dance derives, and from which it represents an alteration.

While admitting that the boundary between dance and non-dance, 'in Umeda or perhaps anywhere,' is not always clear, Gell maintains that there is 'a gap, a threshold however impalpable that is crossed when the body begins to dance, rather than simply move' (ibidem, p. 143). Yet he insists that 'this gap is less a matter of movement *per se* than of meaning' (ibidem). But what if,

instead, we sought meaning within movement? What if, instead of seeing dance as drawing from nondance activities, we saw movement from one domain spilling onto the other, in a sort of osmosis? Gell himself seems to suggest this, as he reflects that 'we always find the self-consciously graceful walk that seems continually to refer to the dance without quite becoming it, and the half-hearted dance that lapses back into the security of mere locomotion' (ibidem, p. 143).

This thesis looks for the meaning of butoh dance within the dance itself or, rather, through the dancing. In doing so, it coalesces aspects of style and meaning that Gell strives to keep apart. The intent of my investigation is to find meaning *in* what Gell calls style, and that I shall simply call movement. Gell's suggestion that dance patterns may draw on ordinary patterns of movement, leading to an alteration of those patterns, is maintained throughout the thesis for, as we shall see, ordinary movement can be used as a reference point for butoh dancing. Yet, instead of considering the transformation of movement patterns in dance as symbolic, that is, as referring back to the domain of society, I contend that the meaning of the transformation is to be sought in the altered modality of perception by the dancer. As such, it is useful to introduce the notion, first proposed by Japanese studies scholar Roquet, that butoh is liminal (Roquet 2003). It is to this notion that I now turn.

The liminal stage (Turner 1969, 1982) is a state of transition that occurs 'betwixt and between' two normative states of the social order, for example in changes of social status or seasonal cycle. In rites of passage, liminality is a leveling process: signs of the initiates' preliminary status are destroyed and signs of their liminal non-status applied. Transitional or liminal stages are characterized by ritual symbolism that suggests erasure, ambiguity and paradox: ritual subjects may be, among the other things, stripped of their names, clothing, and smeared with earth. They become dark, invisible, and anonymous. Liminality subverts the normative order by isolating elements of

culture and recombining them in different, often grotesque ways: 'In liminality people play with elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements' (Turner 1982, p. 27). Turner sees the 'ludic' as the core of liminality, which he defines as a 'seedbed of creativity' (ibidem, p. 28).

Roquet (2003) argues that butoh is liminal in that it articulates, in its imagery and forms, the language of the 'low,' the 'marginal,' and the 'grotesque,' among other things. The painted bodies, shaved heads, distorted expressions, nakedness and tattered clothing displayed by the first *ankoku butoh* movement, are perhaps the most emblematic examples of this (ibidem, p. 59). Butoh's liminality may be found in what Roquet considers its most essential characteristic: that is, its indeterminacy. Butoh, in fact, is not exhausted by the category of 'dance,' but crosses over into a whole array of different – though interconnected – categories:

In the literature on butoh, the style has been described as a particular aesthetic, a particular technique, a particular philosophy, a rebellion set against all codification, and a universal quality present in all performance. Butoh is all and none of these in turn, as the genre both congeals around certain points and continues to transform itself at the same time (Roquet 2003, p. 7).

The difficulty in defining butoh is accompanied by the lack of an agreed-upon methodology of butoh training. In fact, in butoh, there is 'no standard to measure "right" or "wrong" outside of focus and sincerity in allowing the body at that moment to manifest itself through movement' (ibidem, p. 4). A great deal of variation also characterizes butoh aesthetics: 'Butoh hovers around certain ideas and qualities ... but the genre stretches so wide it undermines all attempts at a clean, tidy definition' (ibidem, pp. 6-7). Whilst commonly referred to as a particular genre, butoh opens up 'to include whatever dancers feel is appropriate and necessary' (ibidem, p. 8).

Finally, and perhaps most crucially for the overall thrust of this thesis, Roquet argues that butoh is liminal in that it deconstructs the familiarity of the body, for instance, by emphasizing the ‘materiality of the human form,’ so that the dancer’s body can ‘be made into another substance’ and, generally, become ‘other’ than itself (Roquet 2003, pp. 60-61). By doing so, butoh would also promote an indiscriminate, holistic mode of awareness (ibidem, pp. 55-57) – one that Roquet sees as aligning with a state of *communitas* (Turner 1969).

In this thesis, then, I build upon the perspective that liminality in butoh manifests as ‘otherness,’ through ‘deconstruction’ or ‘transmutation’ of the dancer’s corporeal ‘being.’ In particular, I argue that, in order to grasp the inherent liminality of butoh – as it persists in contemporary settings – we need to account for butoh’s actual processual and perceptual dimensions. This does not preclude that audience members attending a butoh performance may understand *for themselves*, in the transformations of the performer’s body on stage, contents that relate to domains other than the corporeal. Indeed, the communicative power of performance may be seen as lying in the multivocality of the aesthetic dimensions it engages, as will be described further in Chapter Eight.

To sum up, we have explored, through Gell (1999), movement as the kernel of the relationship between dance and non-dance. We have seen, through Roquet, that butoh may be considered liminal. The next step is to transcend the notion that butoh’s contemporary significance is to be discovered outside the dancing. Thus, in the next section, I outline theories that can help us address the processual and experiential dimensions of butoh dance.

2.1.2 Perception and practice: spontaneity and loss of control as 'other'

Beginning in the early 1970s, throughout the 1980s and beyond, the body has progressively acquired centre-stage in anthropology and interdisciplinary cultural studies, followed by a proliferation of new formulations of the body, no longer seen as a fixed, material entity, or a 'brute fact of nature,' but as a dynamic flux-like entity (Csordas 1994, p. 1). That is, no longer to be seen as an object to be studied *in relation to* culture, the body has become the *subject* of culture (ibidem 1990, p. 5).

No longer a biological and mechanistic entity, some saw in the new status of the body as a living socio-cultural agent, the overcoming of old dichotomies – mind *and* body, discourse *and* practice, subject *and* object. Others, however, noted that the new centrality of the body merely relocated human *agency* from the mind to the body, while leaving the very same dichotomies intact (Farnell 1994, p. 930-937; Ingold 2000, p. 170). The same critics argued that, if an actual overcoming of Cartesian precepts was to take place, a more radical examination of the ontological and epistemological foundations of Western thought was needed (Farnell 2000, p. 400; Ingold 2000, pp. 170-171). This would require identification of the persistence, in the language of social theory, of 'modes of dualistic discourse,' such as the distinctions between medical, biological, and socio-cultural bodies (Farnell 1999, p. 360). As an alternative, they proposed that agency should be located in the *person*, understood as a dynamically embodied, situated (Farnell 2000), and bio-cultural entity (Farnell 1994, p. 933; Ingold 2000, p. 170; Downey 2010, pp. 33-35).

Csordas, who writes from a psychological anthropology perspective, includes 'selves' among 'cultural objects' (Csordas 1990, p. 40). For him, a paradigm of embodiment asks how cultural objectifications and objectifications of the self are arrived at: 'Within a paradigm of embodiment, analysis would shift from perceptual categories of classification and differentiation, to perceptual process and questions of objectification and attention/apperception' (ibidem,

p. 35). For Csordas, the collapsing of the duality between subject and object changes the understanding of cultural objects, which are no longer conceived as 'end products' of perception, but in their processual constitution through the interaction of perception and practice (ibidem, pp. 6-9). The formulation of a methodological paradigm of embodiment stems from this attitude, and from the recognition that the aspects of perception and practice need to be taken into account when approaching the open-ended, processual constitution of cultural objects.

Csordas's use of the distinction between subject and object may be understood as an analytical standpoint coming from the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. Phenomenology, in fact, does not deny that 'we are capable of becoming objects to ourselves' (1990, p. 6), nor that 'development of the capacity to objectify is critical to our makeup' (ibidem, p. 36). Instead, it challenges the notion that 'the fully developed adult moving about in the world treats his or her body as an object' (p. 36). Accordingly, Csordas argues that 'on the level of perception it is not legitimate to distinguish mind and body. Starting from perception, however, it then becomes relevant (and possible) to ask how our bodies may become objectified through processes of reflection' (ibidem p. 36). That is, it is not that objectification should be refused altogether, as it does occur as a 'secondary process' and as 'the result of reflection' (ibidem, p. 37). Instead, it should be balanced out by reference to the *pre-objective* dimension of perception.

The *pre-objective* corresponds to the study of perception *prior* to its constitution into objects:

If our perception "ends in objects," the goal of a phenomenological anthropology of perception is to capture that moment of transcendence in which perception begins, and, in the midst of arbitrariness and indeterminacy, constitutes and is constituted by culture (ibidem, p. 9).

As for the problem of practice, for Csordas this is examined via the notion of *habitus*, understood in Bourdieu's formulation as a *modus operandi* by which history reproduces itself by generating and reproducing objective normative structures through the unconscious incorporation of sets of practices, dispositions and representations by individual social agents (Bourdieu 1977). In Bourdieu's words:

Each agent, wittingly or unwittingly ... is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning. Because his actions and works are the products of a *modus operandi* of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery, they contain an "objective intention" ... which always outruns his conscious intentions. (Bourdieu 1977, p. 79).

Csordas, following Bourdieu, emphasizes that what makes the *habitus* effective is the fact that it works on an unconscious level. To him, Bourdieu's definition of the *habitus* 'holds promise because it focuses on the psychologically internalized content of the behavioral environment' (Csordas 1990, p. 11).

Farnell has criticized Bourdieu's formulation of *habitus* as intrinsically dualistic. In her view, *habitus* replicates the deterministic view that locates an 'objective' power of causation in reified social forces, except that this realm of social causation is no longer in the external world but 'embodied and located in the individual' (Farnell 2000, p. 408). The problem for Farnell is that we never get to people interacting (*ibidem*). That is, instead of locating agency in the joint activity of dynamically embodied persons (*ibidem*, p. 405), Bourdieu mislocates it in the individual *habitus*, 'a hypothetical cognitive and transcendent causal nexus that has no ontological grounding because it exists *somewhere* between neurophysiology and the person' (*ibidem*, p. 412, emphasis in the original). Thus, despite his attention to practice, Bourdieu fails to account for human agency as located in meaningful interaction in the social world (*ibidem*, p. 413). According to Farnell, Bourdieu's insistence that

practice is unconscious perpetuates a Cartesian view of the body as 'a mindless, unconscious repository and mechanistic operator of practical techniques' (ibidem, p. 409), hence, no more than 'a mnemonic device upon and in which the basic practical taxonomies of the *habitus* are imprinted and encoded during socialization' (ibidem, p. 408).

Csordas's move consists in ontologically grounding the *habitus* in the phenomenological notion of the pre-objective. His emphasis on individual perception compensates for Bourdieu's 'deterministic' account of social discourse. That is, while *habitus* understood as a set of historically perpetuating, unconscious dispositions may be seen by scholars like Farnell as taking over and even annihilating individual agency, Csordas's use of the pre-objective makes space for a dialogic dimension between individual agency and the socio-cultural framework in which individuals are embedded.

It may be argued that Csordas's paradigm of embodiment reiterates the fallacy that Farnell ascribes to Bourdieu, that is, of separating the 'mind,' as located in reified social structures, from the 'body,' as sensuous yet unconscious. That is, what could be seen as lacking in Csordas's approach is an attention to conscious *doing*, rather than the experientially *felt*, as the coming-into-being of embodied relational agents. Csordas's approach, however, would seem to be viable because the phenomenon he examines, that of ritual possession, is considered by its very own nature, unconscious. That is, the possessions Csordas examines take place in a contemporary Christian healing context where emotional disturbances are thematized as supernatural forces located *in* the individual yet *outside* his or her conscious control. Whilst they are experienced as 'spontaneous and without preordained content' (Csordas 1990, p. 15), those manifestations are not only acceptable but also constitute 'original acts of communication which ... emerge from a shared *habitus*' (ibidem). Thus, in the healing context, manifestations of an emotional character are turned into socially intellegible and manageable forms: while the disturbances experientially exist prior to

their cultural objectification, agency lies in their being 'acted out' (ibidem, pp. 13-14) within a religious milieu.

Csordas's examination offers an example of how a paradigm of embodiment, which takes both perception and practice into account, can be applied. The first modality of healing practice that he examines consists in the 'casting out of demons:' a priest typically prays by naming evil spirits of different types, and then commands them to depart their hosts. As the spirits are cast out from the afflicted persons, they produce a physical manifestation as a sign of their departure (Csordas 1990, p. 13). Those manifestations may consist in 'vomiting, writhing on the floor, hissing, rolling the eyes to the top of the head' (ibidem, p. 17), according to the type of demonic disturbance at work. Csordas notes that a pre-objective element exists in this healing practice, which rests on the fact that participants experience those demonic manifestations as 'spontaneous and without preordained content' (ibidem, p. 15). He also observes that the elaboration of physical manifestations as signs of the spirit coming out is a cultural objectification that is discerned by the priest, not by the patient. 'Persons do not perceive a demon inside themselves, they sense a particular thought, behavior or emotion as outside their control' (ibidem, p. 14).

From a psychological anthropology perspective, Csordas argues that it is the excessive nature of a particular thought, behavior or emotion – e.g. 'as having surpassed or transgressed a tolerance threshold defined by intensity, generalization, duration, or frequency of distress' – that determines the person's experience of that particular thought, behavior, or emotion as affliction (ibidem, pp. 15-16). Self-awareness that a culturally defined threshold of 'normality' has been surpassed leads the patient to objectify his or her condition into a conventional – that is, a culturally pre-determined – demonic idiom. As Csordas points out, while physical manifestations are 'original acts of communication,' these take a limited number of forms because they emerge from a shared habitus (ibidem, p. 15). In particular, the self-

objectification of a pre-objective compulsion or affliction into the intelligible demonic idiom *signifies* at once the 'presence of evil' and 'release from it' (or 'healing') (ibidem, p.16).

This pre-objective, 'outside one's control' aspect is crucial to the perceptual constitution of the phenomenon, and to its cultural thematization as demonic intrusion. It is interesting to contrast this process with a second modality of healing, that of incorporation of divine power. In this latter case, 'common elements of the repertoire are rapid fluttering or vibrating of hands and arms, and somatic sensations such as lightness or heaviness, power or love flowing through the body, heat, and tingling' (ibidem, p. 18), and also spontaneous laughter and tears (ibidem). This time, the spontaneous character of those manifestations is interpreted as a sign of the presence of God, which is the 'cultural inverse' of the presence of evil (ibidem, p. 19): while 'loss of control' represents the phenomenological criterion of the demonic, 'spontaneity' is the phenomenological criterion of the divine (ibidem, pp. 33-34).

What interests us in Csordas' analysis is the process by which 'the interplay of sensory modalities, social interaction, and meaning attribution' (ibidem, p. 20) converges in the experience of a reality that is radically 'other' and beyond the patient's individual power. For Csordas, the perceptual constitution of multisensory imagery, emotions and somatic manifestations, either in their thematization as demons or as God, are based on bodily knowledge that is inculcated as culturally shared dispositions: 'These somatic images are here being inculcated as *techniques du corps* that will embody dispositions characteristic of the religious milieu' (ibidem, p. 20). Because it is found 'at a level beneath awareness' (ibidem, p. 23), the principle of production of these phenomena is misrecognized as either the demonic or the divine, instead of the socially informed body.

Csordas' analysis is a good starting point to begin examining the thematization of butoh as 'other,' because those 'pre-objective' manifestations that were found in religious rituals of the sort that Csordas describes, i.e., spontaneity and loss of control, can be also found in butoh. In butoh, also, such manifestations can be thematized as incorporation of something 'other.' While in butoh the type of objectification is not pre-determined, and varies from dancer to dancer, a commonly-held notion is that the dancer's body becomes a vehicle for something else. For instance, British dancer Ray Baskerville describes butoh as 'a vehicle for the manifestation of the spirit' (Baskerville, personal communication). Also, it is not unusual to find butoh dancers, both Japanese and non-Japanese, who interpret their dance as a way to communicate with or relate to non-human entities: for instance, Japanese butoh dancer Toshiharu Kasai says that when he dances butoh, he dances 'for the gods' (Kasai, personal conversation).

I will return to this notion of 'spontaneity' and 'loss of control' in butoh in Chapter Five and in Chapter Eight. Meanwhile, in the next section, I focus on the notion that butoh dance's 'pre-objective' manifestations might be inherent to its efficacy as an art form.

2.2 Butoh between religion and performance

2.2.1 Extending the paradigm of embodiment, from ritual to performance

A paradigm of embodiment based on notions of the *pre-objective* and the *habitus*, by emphasizing unconscious (whilst socially determined) processes of cultural expression, does not satisfactorily account for aspects of intentionality, self-discipline, and research that are constituent elements in contemporary artistic practice, for instance, in the form of the individual artist's striving for technical achievement and progress. In devising a paradigm of

embodiment that, through a combined outlook on perception and practice, could address the perceptual constitution of the butoh body, I have found it necessary to move the focus of attention from the unconscious formation of cultural dispositions, which dominates Csordas's psychological and phenomenological interpretation of religious healing practices, to the aspect of conscious or semi-conscious formation of such dispositions through dance and performance training.

In his neuroanthropological study of capoeira training, Downey also identified limitations to the notion of the *habitus* in accounting for processes of adult enculturation. His critique is three-fold. Firstly, he observes that capoeira training is based on *imitative* training which, far from being unidirectional and 'outside the field of conscious awareness,' is a two-way form of interaction, which is supported by sophisticated, if often subtle, teaching techniques (2008, pp. 205; 210). Bourdieu's insistence that the habitus is a non-conscious and inarticulable (Downey 2010, p. 25) conflicts with Downey's observation that capoeira teaching 'may include quite complex forms of movement analysis, abstraction, and selective demonstration by teachers' (Downey 2008, p. 205). Secondly, Downey notes that 'Bourdieu often unnecessarily homogenizes his account of practice' (Downey 2007, p. 237) suggesting, e.g., that capoeira learning is developmentally more heterogeneous than the overarching, unifying concept of the habitus would suggest:

Bourdieu insists that the habitus is a single, simple generative principle that creates practice; the unevenness of learning, the slow pace, inconsistency, and piecemeal acquisition of techniques in capoeira suggests a much more complex, diffuse process (Downey 2010, pp. 31).

Thirdly, and related to the second point, Downey criticises Bourdieu for perpetuating a dichotomic model of perception and action as 'linked by a separate, unifying cognitive structure (other than the body or nervous system

itself' (2010, p. 28). Just as 'classical models of cognition draw a sharp distinction between perceptual input and active output in the brain ... [so] the model of the habitus suggests that some *other*, higher-order abstraction must be involved in generating action' (ibidem, pp. 28-29, original emphasis). Meanwhile, recent neurological evidence known as the 'common coding hypothesis' makes the notion of an overarching cognitive model redundant by suggesting the common neural coding of action with perception of action (ibidem, pp. 28-32). Downey proposes to overcome the limitations intrinsic in the habitus, by grounding it in careful observation of skill acquisition and bodily learning. Also, he proposes to complement the habitus with biological and cultural approaches to the notion of enculturation (2010, p. 33).

In my research on butoh, the very nature of my fieldwork as an intensive immersion in the behavioral environments of classes, workshops and performance settings where butoh 'idioms' were produced and articulated, often in combination with other performance or physical training idioms, has directed my attention not only toward 'group dynamics' of butoh socialisation (i.e. teacher-students dynamics), but also to learning and socialisation processes that centre on the individual practitioner, through autonomous questioning, experimenting, and exploring. Such individually-led creative processes are to be seen as an integral part of contemporary butoh practice.

In the following sections, I will build upon Csordas' theory of embodiment by mobilizing theories from the anthropology of performance and the anthropology of the senses. While relying on the notion of a thematization of the butoh body as 'other,' theories from the anthropology of performance may assist us in bringing to the fore aspects of 'method,' 'technique' and 'artistry' that, via their creative incorporation and articulation by individual dancers, can be seen as integral to the perceptual constitution of the butoh body as a cultural object. Meanwhile, whereas theories from the anthropology of performance are used to highlight the aspect of 'technique' in butoh, theories from the anthropology of the senses highlight the fact that such techniques are based on sensory modalities of socialisation.

2.2.2 'Liminal' and 'liminoid'

In approaching the study of butoh anthropologically, a crucial question is that of the tension between the aspects of spontaneity, loss of control, and incorporation of otherness – something that butoh dance shares with religious ritual – and the fundamental nature of butoh as a performance genre. Turner's distinction between liminal and liminoid (1982), and Schechner's theory of 'entertainment/efficacy braid' (1988) can be useful as starting points to scrutinize this tension.

We have already described the liminal as a condition pertaining to the transitional phase of *rites of passage* in so-called 'simple' societies. According to Turner (1982), whereas in such simple societies liminality is integral to the consolidation of the normative social order, in complex societies the liminal is marginalized to the leisure modalities of sport, art, drama, and literature. Turner uses the term 'liminoid' to refer to this latter configuration of the 'liminal' as pertaining to the particular atomized configuration of complex societies (ibidem, p. 52). Although both liminal and liminoid phenomena identify 'types of socio-cultural processes and settings in which new symbols, verbal and non-verbal, tend to be generated' (ibidem, p. 20), the two are different in important ways. For instance, the liminal is obligatory while the liminoid is voluntary: 'Optation pervades the liminoid phenomenon, obligation the liminal. One is all play and choice, an entertainment, the other is a matter of deep seriousness, even dread, it is demanding, compulsory ...' (ibidem, p. 43). Also, the liminal represents an important, 'sacrosanct' component to the life of the community, whereas the liminoid is the domain of individual choice:

In the so-called "high culture" of complex societies, liminoid is not only removed from a *rite of passage* context, it is also "individualized." The solitary artist *creates* the liminoid phenomena, the collectivity

experiences collective liminal symbols. This does not mean that the maker of liminoid symbols, ideas, images, etc., does so ex-nihilo; it only means that he is privileged to make free with his social heritage in a way impossible to members of cultures in which the liminal is to a large extent sacrosanct (Turner 1982, p. 52, emphasis in the original).

Performance studies scholar and theatre-maker Richard Schechner (1988), builds upon Turner's theory of the liminal/oid by reformulating the relationship between 'liminal' and 'liminoid' as a relationship between 'ritual' and 'aesthetic' performance. The difference between the two lies in the degree and the nature of the 'transformation' that they yield in the participants.

Whereas aesthetic/liminoid action is predominantly symbolic, says Schechner, ritual/liminal action is not just symbolic but also 'efficacious' on a social level; for instance, the symbolic action accompanying the reintegration phase in *rites of passage* not only 'represents' the change of status but also 'actualizes' those changes in the lives of the initiates. Following his theory, we could say that, for instance, the 'demonic idiom' adopted in Christian rites, that I discussed earlier, not only symbolizes the intervention/intrusion of spiritual entities, it also signifies that the healing action carried out by priests on the patient was efficacious. This 'conflation of symbolic and actual events is missing from most aesthetic theater. In aesthetic theater and dance the symbolic action alone exists' (ibidem, p. 118).¹⁰

Schechner admits that the distinction between ritual and aesthetic performance is not always as clear-cut or easy to define, and refers to the pig-kill ritual at Kurumugl, in Papua New Guinea, as an example of social drama

¹⁰ There are, of course, exceptions to that. For instance, the avant-garde theatres that emerged in the 1960s and 70s in Europe and North America, used aesthetic performance in such a way that was meant to also yield 'efficacious' acts (Schechner 1985, pp.141-142; Schechner 1988, pp. 120-124).

that blurs into aesthetic performance (Schechner 1988). The pig-kill is a two-day ceremony of exchange between tribes in which the host tribe fulfills their obligations with the other tribe by killing and cooking a large number of pigs. The ceremony involves a great deal of preparation, including dressing up and dances, with the men from the two tribes confronting each other in ritual combat, until finally they all plunge into the opulent meat banquet. 'The payback ceremony involves an exchange of roles in which creditors become debtors and debtors become creditors. This insures that more ceremonies will follow when the new debtors accumulate enough pigs' (ibidem, p. 115). The ritual action accompanying the carefully prepared and carried out payback ceremony not only symbolizes but also actualizes a change of status among the social actors involved, e.g., from debtors to creditors, and vice versa. However, the transformation in social relations also presents the character of an aesthetic performance, e.g., in the form of dressing up for the dances, the ritual combat, and the general opulence of the display.

To summarize the discussion so far, I began by presenting Turner's theory of the liminal/oid. While both liminal and liminoid constitute suspensions of the social order in which cultural elements might be recombined in a ludic way, they have different aims: the former has an integral role within the life of a community and, for this reason, might be seen as compulsory, for instance in the context of a religious ritual; the latter is non-mandatory and is related to individual choice, for instance in the form of leisure activities, such as art or sport. I continued with Schechner's suggestion that what distinguishes liminal from liminoid lies in the degree of 'efficacy' that the two types of social processes have, in terms of the impact that they are meant to exercise on the social order. Thus, for instance, whereas the action of pronouncing two people husband and wife in the context of a religious rite determines an actual transformation of the social relation between them, the same action performed in a play takes place only symbolically, not actually. As Schechner puts it: '[a]esthetic drama is less instrumental and more ornamental than social drama. Also, it can use symbolic time and place and in doing so become

entirely fictionalized' (Schechner 1988, p. 116). Yet, Schechner also reminds us that instead of seeing 'efficacy' and 'entertainment' as mutually exclusive in pertaining the one to theater and the other to ritual, we should see them as poles in a continuum: 'No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment' (ibidem, p. 120) and whether a performance is classified as 'ritual' or as 'theater' is mostly a matter of context and function (ibidem). In light of these considerations, we could see *butoh* as placed in the same continuum between aesthetic and ritual performance, with different dancers placing themselves at different poles of the continuum, by attaching different degrees of 'efficacy' of the dance in their lives (i.e. spiritually, therapeutically, etc.).

Meanwhile, we need to keep asking ourselves where/what the source of that perceived 'efficacy' of *butoh* onto a social level would be, especially as the complex intermingling of significances in *butoh* encompasses the 'aesthetic,' the 'sacred' and, at times, even the 'political.' We have seen that, although all these notions can be easily attached to *butoh*, the latter is, as Roquet rightfully put it, 'all and none of these in turn' (Roquet 2003, p. 7). Thus, for instance, although *ankoku butoh* was largely perceived as 'rebellious' toward the enforcing of Western 'modernity' on Japanese culture, *butoh* dancers never tried to be political (Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988), and Hijikata himself 'was not a political person' (Kasai, personal conversation).

Based on the notion that 'aesthetic' and 'ritual' performance entail different degrees of 'efficacy' in relation to social order (Schechner 1988), I suggest that *butoh*'s perceived subversion of social order is symbolic, not actual. Yet this is not a symbolism that *butoh* performers intentionally attach to their performances. Rather, it is contingent on the performers' radical use of their bodies through *butoh*. In other words, the meanings that an audience or critics may read into *butoh* dance are intrinsically related to the *butoh* dancer's undermining of the 'integrity' of the body itself. I argue that the power of *butoh* rests on its being articulated in and through the semantic level of the body as the fundamental paradigm of human experience and 'the existential ground of

culture' (Csordas 1990, p. 5). Meanwhile, as I will show in the following discussion, at the level of the body itself the transformations undergone by the dancer through butoh training and performing are perceptual, not symbolic.

In the next section I will pursue the notion that butoh's 'otherness' articulates through the incorporation of the performative idioms of trance and possession phenomena by a dancer.

2.2.3 Techniques of 'otherness'

An action entails a different degree of 'social efficacy,' depending on whether it is taking place in a ritual or aesthetic performance setting. Here I am particularly concerned with trance and possession idioms and how their contents and modalities vary in accordance with the context – that is, either aesthetic or ritual – in which they are being articulated.

It has been noted that Butoh dancers draw on 'shamanistic techniques' directed at altering their ordinary perception during performance (i.e., Fraleigh 2010, p. 52; Kurihara 1996). Kurihara, for instance, says that Hijikata was able to achieve, by means of a conscious, sophisticated use of bodily techniques, a 'dual condition' on stage, which allowed him to move between awareness and unawareness, between spontaneity and control.

For Hijikata, a butoh dancer must be extremely sensitive to the internal sensations and sounds of his body. He must first become aware of his domesticated body and then reach his own primary chaos, in which he is one with his body. Onstage, the butoh dancer must achieve a dual condition in which he is in touch with his primary state, and yet he must be aware of what he is doing at the same time. He cannot lose himself, but must maintain the ability to observe himself (Kurihara 1996, p. 101).

This 'dual condition' of going in and out of consciousness is something that butoh shares with performing arts such as Noh theatre (Kurihara, *ibidem*, p. 103), and the styles of actor training that were initiated by theatre directors Stanivslavski (Schechner 1988, p. 177) and Grotowski (Lendra 1995, p. 140). In turn, all these forms of aesthetic performance are similar to ritual performance in their use of 'techniques' of trance and ecstasy (Schechner 1988, p. 177). For instance, a drama performer's ability to enter and exit a character at will has been compared to the Balinese trancer's disposition to become possessed by an animal or spirit: both require a degree of self-awareness alongside the ability to 'become other' (Schechner 1988, p. 176). Thus, whereas one might think that a trance is more 'genuine' in a ritual than in an aesthetic performance context (because they have different social meanings and functions), both are genuine in their intention of accessing altered states by way of culturally instilled techniques of the body.

Ritual trance dancers *appear to* be losing control, but this does not mean that they *actually* lose control completely. As Schechner, for instance, points out, 'the Balinese say that if a trance dancer hurts himself the trance was not genuine' (Schechner 1988, p. 175). Lendra (1995) describes Balinese trance as a process of going in and out of consciousness: '... during the state of trance, the Balinese trancer experiences both a state of acute awareness, a state of the true self (*inget*) and a state of being unaware (*engsap*). In the state of *inget* the trancer is very much her- or himself and can be very playful, like a child, while in the state of *engsap* the connection with the surrounding is cut, during which the stabbing¹¹ may occur' (*ibidem*, p. 140, Lendra's italics). Despite trance dancers being to a certain extent aware of what they are doing,

¹¹ Lendra is referring to a *calonarang* performance, a Balinese trance dance drama which features the performers carrying sharp daggers, called *kris*, with which they stab themselves during the trance: '... it was remarkable that they were not at all aware of stabbing their chests or cheeks with the sharp steel daggers, or of eating live chicks. During the violent moment of stabbing, the performers were carefully watched by assistants in case of an unexpected mistake.' (Lendra 1995, p. 140).

Jane Belo explains that the community has the role of making sure that trance dancers do not get out of hand. In the circumstances where this happens, the consequences can be unpleasant, as in the case in which a Balinese man who was possessed by an animal spirit (a pig) escaped from the courtyard and was not caught until the next morning: 'He had by that time ravaged the gardens, trampled and eaten the plants, which was not good for the village. He had also, being a pig, eaten large quantities of excreta he had found in the roadways, which was not good for him' (Belo 1960, p. 202).

If we compare these accounts with what Kurihara says about Hijikata entering a state of trance during his performances, we find that Hijikata's dual state was different from that of a trance dancer in that, whereas the latter could count on the help and control exercised by the community, Hijikata could not.

[Hijikata] rejects the exotic and romantic notions of his dance as a kind of mystical possession. Butoh dance is not trance, according to Hijikata. A shaman can often be possessed without any awareness of what is happening, surrounded and protected by his religious community. However, Hijikata, without such a community, had to split himself between the conscious and the unconscious, being simultaneously aware and unaware (Kurihara 1996, p. 102).

To this extent, an important difference between rituals and aesthetic performances (such as butoh) is that they are distinct social events, which involve different degrees of participation from the side of the community. Despite both drawing on techniques that alter their psycho-physical condition, while the religious trance dancer can rely on the support of the community during the trance, the actor or dancer can rely only on himself.

Performance theory has brought to the fore the fact that ritual and aesthetic performances draw on techniques of altered states of consciousness. This aspect will be further discussed in Chapter Seven, where I review

performance techniques that entail the potential to access altered states of awareness. Next, however, I wish to turn to some of the themes dealt with by anthropologists of the senses, among which is the notion of sensory socialisation. This will serve the purpose of investigating butoh's techniques of the body, how they are learned and how they are applied.

2.3 Kinesthesia as a perceptual mode of cultural knowledge

The fundamental premise underlying the establishment of the anthropology of the senses as a distinctive field is the view that sensory perception is not only a biological but also a cultural act. Focusing on variations of the sensorium across different social contexts, theorists of the senses suggest that the world is experienced and explained differently depending on the specific configurations of the sensorium that members of a culture share (Howes 1991). That is, differences in sensory organization explain cultural variations in the conceptual apparatus as grounded in sensory perception: 'By the sensorium we mean here the entire sensory apparatus as an operational complex. The differences in cultures ... can be thought of as differences in the sensorium, the organization of which is in part determined by culture while at the same time it makes culture' (Ong, in Howes 1991, p. 28). Hence, different cultural dispositions towards knowledge have been explained in terms of sensory specialization, for instance, the traditional view of Western culture's disposition towards a Cartesian model of rational knowledge – seen as 'objective,' 'speculative,' and 'distancing' – is associated with depictions of Western culture as 'ocularcentric,' that is, as privileging sight over the other senses.

This monodimensional approach to sensory perception and knowledge has been severely criticized. Ingold (2000), for instance, illustrates how seeing is not just a matter of distancing or objectifying. For him, it can be as much receptive, subjective and holistic as other sensory modalities, such as

hearing. Stroecken (2008) has built upon Ingold's suggestion by arguing that, within the same society, the same 'sensory modality' – sight, hearing, touch etc – can be articulated in different 'codes,' depending on the given situation and the social interaction that situation entails. This view is compatible with the fact that, in the 'West' there are professional or specialized subcultures whose very existence depends on the privileging of sensory modalities other than sight. Anthropologist Caroline Potter, for instance, shows that modern dance practitioners in the West cultivate a sensorium not dominated by vision but by kinesthesia, or a sense of movement (Potter 2007).

In this thesis I argue that a focus on the sensory, not just as a biological but also as a cultural process, can shed light on the cultural constitution of the *butoh* body through perception and practice. For instance, a focus on the aspect of 'perception,' may bring to the fore that kinesthesia is the privileged sensory modality at work in the making of the *butoh* body. A kinesthetic perspective on *butoh* may, in turn, reveal that the significance of *butoh*'s indeterminate aesthetic order lies in the aspect of movement as 'feeling' rather than as 'form.' The 'kinesthetic trajectory' in dance ethnography helps us to do this, as it addresses the nature of movement as a 'somatic mode of knowledge' and as a carrier of meaning *per se* (Sklar 2000, p. 70).

A sensory approach to *butoh* can also help us identify the aspect of 'practice' as the privileged channel of *butoh* socialisation. Scholars of 'kinaesthetic cultures' (Samudra 2008) have, for instance, examined the acquisition of new social identities based on shared bodily practices in the cultural life of adults. Meanwhile, Bateson and Mead (1942) were pioneers in showing the enormous role of kinesthetic perception in Balinese means of socialisation. Evidence of the primacy of kinesthesia in the socio-cultural constitution of the Balinese self is offered by photographic documentation of body-to-body communication between parent and child, or between teacher and pupil:

Learning to walk, learning the first appropriate gestures of playing musical instruments, learning to eat, and to dance are all accomplished with the teacher behind the pupil, conveying directly by pressure, and almost always with a minimum of words, the gesture to be performed (ibidem, p. 15).

Body-to-body communication has a fundamental role in butoh socialisation also. In the latter case, however, it takes on the significance of a process of 'desocialisation,' which is explored in Chapter Five. Also, whereas in the case of the Balinese, I see kinesthesia at work at the level of the *habitus*, that is, in the unconscious absorption of objective cultural dispositions through the processes of ontogenesis and child socialization, in butoh kinesthesia is at work at the level of the (liminoid) reconfiguring of the objective, culturally-determined dispositions.

2.4 Recapitulation and conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined some of the theories that allow a framing of butoh anthropologically. Theories from the anthropology of dance have helped us to consider the problem of a relationship between dance and society. Following Gell (1999), I proposed that movement is central to the social significance of dance. Yet, whereas movement for Gell is no more than a semiotic link between dance and nondance, which has no meaning in itself, I propose that, in butoh, movement is the message. Thus, the meaning of dance should be sought within dancing itself, not outside of it, in a supposedly separated domain of society.

From the same perspective, and specifically in addressing the question of the contemporary social significance of butoh, I have drawn a link between the butoh body and liminality, as both grounded in an indeterminate perceptual order (Turner 1969; 1982). Meanwhile, Csordas's 'paradigm of embodiment'

(1990) provided a suitable starting point to approach the indeterminate configurations of the butoh body, while also accounting for its manifold objectifications in performance. Then, the anthropology of performance and the anthropology of the senses allowed us to think of the perceptual constitution of the butoh body not as a totally unconscious process, but through conscious or semi-conscious acquisition of technical skills, e.g., in the form of dance training. Finally, a sensory and specifically kinesthetic approach to butoh's indeterminacy proved fertile, as it accounts both for 'perception' and 'practice,' which I understand as integral to the cultural constitution of the butoh body.

In the next chapter I shall return on this latter point by introducing my methodology of research into butoh dance.

CHAPTER THREE

3 Methods and fieldsites

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research context, methodology, and ethical matters encountered in the field.

In the first section I present the research context: I introduce the research case study, the Oxford-based butoh company *Café Reason*, outline the chronology of fieldwork with this group, and address matters of confidentiality, e.g., the use of informants' actual names in the research. I also mention the work that was done around in dance and performance environments other than *Café Reason*.

In the second section I describe the research approach and methodology. I distinguish between two main kinds of socio-sensory environments within *Café Reason*, namely, dance and non-dance environments. Having delimited my investigation into dance environments, I discuss how, in those contexts, the parameters of participant observation were extended – through participation in training, improvising and performing with that group – into 'thick participation' (Samudra 2008). In particular, I explain the role that kinesthetic engagement has played in my research.

In the third section, I outline additional research methods, from note taking to videoing, and discuss issues of ethics and confidentiality that are attached to them.

3.2 Research context

3.2.1 Informed consent and authorship issues

Key informants in this research were members of *Café Reason*, butoh and non-butoh teachers, as well as occasional participants in classes, workshops and performance work. The name of the company, *Café Reason*, and those of its members are real. The group was fully informed of my research and consented to take part in it. They also agreed with my using their real names and the name of their group for my thesis. I also use the real names of key collaborators and teachers who, while not being members of *Café Reason*, were informed of my research and consented to it.

The main reason why I resolved to use my informants' real names – hence breaching the anthropological tradition of disguising names and places to protect research participants – is that, in several parts of this thesis, I report and analyze my informants' work and creative practice. In one case, one of my informants pointed out that I should have acknowledged the origin of the work I was describing by providing the person's real name. Being a professional performer, matters of 'authorship' or 'intellectual property' were important to the person in question. I hence resolved that in cases where I mention the participants' creative work, anonymity should not apply, unless expressively required by the participants themselves, as it would bring up dilemmas of intellectual property in relation to the creative work under examination. My use of the participants' real names in this thesis, thus, represents a way of giving credit to their work as dancers and performers.

I decided to disguise the names of those informants who were not members of *Café Reason*, nor collaborators or teachers who knew of my work: for instance, occasional participants in butoh classes, or people I casually met at

butoh workshops and performances, who were not fully aware of my research. For this category of informants I use pseudonyms, indicated by the abbreviation 'pseud.' following a fictitious name.

Information regarding participants has been selected in such a way that it is instrumental to the analysis of dance practice in the group *Café Reason* and in related contexts. I did not include information related to intimate or very personal aspects of participants' lives, be they anonymous or not. In a few occasions, however, it was difficult to clearly separate the artistic dimension from the personal, as in the case of performance making processes, or when investigating my participants' motivations to dance. On those occasions, I made sure that I could use the information a participant was providing me, by asking his or her permission to do so.

In this thesis, I both paraphrase my informants and use verbatim transcripts from audio recorded interviews (as indicated by the expression 'audio recording' reported in brackets at the end of a quote). Interviews with my informants were audio recorded with their full knowledge of my research and with their consent. For more information on the ethics of video and audio recording in this research, see section 3.7 *Confidentiality in using video and audio recording*.

Finally, I would like to alert the reader to some aspects of style in this thesis. All dance instructions and quotes are reported in italics, in order to distinguish them from more generic, non-dance instructions and quotes. When engaging in ethnographic description, I sometimes use the present rather than the past tense. This is an attempt to restore the immediacy of a particular experience, especially if that experience has a physical dimension that is relevant to the overall analysis.

3.2.2 A short history of *Café Reason*

Jeannie Donald initiated the butoh company *Café Reason* in Oxford, with the support of a group of friends and collaborators, after finding out about this art form in Japan.¹²

I discovered butoh by accident. I was [in Japan] teaching English and I became friends with another English girl at my language school who had done butoh. She showed me a video [of butoh] and I was blown away. Then, I went to a performance by [butoh dancer] Katsura Kan, and I was completely blown away. So I started going to Katsura Kan's classes. I never imagined that at some point I would perform, I was only going as a class participant. But then I performed...and that blew me away as well. ... I went to Japan to stay only for six months and ended up staying for four years, from 1991 to 1995. Discovering butoh was the main thing that made me stay. I really got into it (Jeannie, personal conversation, audio recorded).

On her return to the UK, Jeannie involved two other people in her discovery: her childhood friend Fabrizia Verrecchia (Bitzia), who is a Yoga teacher and Indian Classical dancer, and Ayala Kingsley, a graphic designer and poet. While Jeannie and Fabrizia had been known each other for a long time, Jeannie met Ayala at a *shintaido*¹³ class in Oxford, when she first came back from Japan:

¹² The name '*Café Reason*' comes from a dream that Jeannie's husband, Jules, had one night. Jeannie reported the dream to me: 'he was somewhere in the Third World, and he was cycling to meet me. In the dream I was running a café, and also selling clothes. And the café was called *Café Reason*' (Jeannie, personal communication, audio recorded).

¹³ A Japanese martial art.

I could not believe I could find a shintaido class in Oxford because it used to be quite unknown, even in Japan. ... But that is where I met Ayala. ... At that time I was desperate to tell everybody about butoh, so one evening [after the *shintaido* class] I took my butoh books with me and [said]: ‘Hey! Hey! Look at this! Look at this! This is *butoh*!’ It was a picture book and Ayala was really struck by it, so we exchanged contact details.

Soon after Jeannie started running butoh classes at *Fusionarts*, an art charity based in East Oxford. She also staged her first butoh piece, in collaboration with a choir and a contact improvisation group, also based at *Fusionarts*. In her words, that first performance was

...a nightmare. I wanted to use the butoh white paint but one of the others said: ‘Oh no, we have got clay.’ – It sucked all the heat out of our bodies and then it cracked and fell off. As for the costumes, I wanted people to wear g-strings like they do in Japan, but nobody had heard about butoh. ...The piece was up a tree. It was all about elements: I was a cloud. It did not even have a title – the subsequent title was *Up a tree without a clue*.

This ‘proto-*Café Reason*’ butoh piece must have had some appeal, however, because two members of the audience – Ayala Kingsley and Helen Edwards – consequently became involved with Jeannie’s performance work.

After *Up a tree without a clue* it was the turn of *Bona Dea* (1997), which was performed at the *Freud’s* café in Oxford by a newly formed group of five: Jeannie, Bitzia, Ayala, Suzette [Youngs] and Lee [Adams]. After the performance at Freud’s, the group was approached by a member of the *Pegasus Theatre* in Oxford and commissioned a show for the following December. The performing of *Bona Dea* at the *Pegasus* marks the official beginning of *Café Reason* as a butoh dance theatre company.

Over the years, new people – Bruno Guastalla, Helen Edwards, Malcolm Atkins and Ana Barbour – joined the group, while others – Suzette Youngs and Lee Adams – left. Jeannie, Bitzia and Ayala are the only members from the original formation.

At the time I was doing my fieldwork, Bruno Guastalla, a violin maker, musician and performer, and Helen Edwards, an independent performance artist, no longer took part in *Café Reason* weekly training and in their performances. They did, however, stay in touch with the group, with whom they collaborated from time to time. By virtue of this continuing interest in *Café Reason*'s work they are considered 'associates' rather than strictly 'members' of the group.

Another 'associate' is Malcolm Atkins (Ph.D., Music), whose support and contribution to *Café Reason* spanned from playing live music during the weekly butoh classes to composing music for their performances. In 2011, however, a disagreement between Malcolm and Jeannie led Malcolm to cease his activities with *Café Reason*. Malcolm stopped playing at the weekly butoh classes (except when Jeannie was not around), collaborating and, generally, hanging out with the group as a whole. This has happened even though, apart from Jeannie, he was – and still is – on good terms with most members of the group.

Ana Barbour is a dancer and independent performer who lived in Malaysia and Indonesia for several years, before moving back to the UK. In Malaysia, Ana trained in classical Indian dance, later becoming part of Lena Ang's butoh group *Taro Dance Theatre*. Ana says that at the time she was in Malaysia she was not aware of what butoh was, or what it represented. She learnt more about it only on her return to the UK, when she came across the *London Butoh Network* (an organisation run by Marie-Gabrielle Rotie in London,

providing butoh training and workshops). In Oxford, she discovered the group *Café Reason* and joined it, becoming increasingly involved with their teaching and performing.

Current members of *Café Reason* include Paul MacKilligin, Adam Murphy, and Flavia Coube, who have become members by virtue of their continuous involvement with training and performance making with this group.

The *Café Reason* Friday evening butoh class always attracts new participants.

3.2.3 *Café Reason* logo

Café Reason's logo, as it appears in their website and event publicity, is an image of spirals with eggs [Plate 1].



Plate 1: Café Reason logo

Café Reason first used this symbol for the publicity of their performance *Bona Dea* (1997), which was inspired by the myth of the Great Goddess.¹⁴ Ayala, who designs the posters for *Café Reason* events, came across the ‘spirals with eggs’ in an archaeology book, where she also learnt that that symbol was an ancient iconography of the Great Goddess. She thus decided that she would use that image on the posters and flyers of *Bona Dea*. Since then, *Café Reason* has kept the symbol of ‘spiral with eggs.’ On their website, they outline the value of this choice by drawing a link between the ‘spiral with eggs’ and butoh’s spiritual character:

According to archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, the ‘eggs’ on the Karanavo dish represent not simply life, but rebirth and continuity, the repeated recreation of the world, while the swirling spirals are symbols of energy and unfolding; of the dynamic, reciprocal, natural forces that keep the wheel in motion. ... In butoh, we seek connection with our most ancient selves, emptying our minds of modern preoccupations, allowing the vital energy of the dance to possess our bodies. In our dance we carry the potentiality of the egg and the life-force of the spiral: we are born, are transformed, become. (*Café Reason* website¹⁵)

3.2.4 The field

My fieldwork with *Café Reason* was carried out for a period of over three years, starting in January 2008. While the fieldwork was long-term, my

¹⁴ On their website *Café Reason* reports that ‘[t]he worship of the Great Goddess spread across the whole of the Near East, Mediterranean, and central, northern and western Europe, before being replaced by the major monotheistic religions’ (<http://cafereason.com/main/logo.htm>, last accessed on January 15, 2012).

¹⁵ <http://cafereason.com/main/logo.htm>, last accessed on January 15, 2012.

interactions with the group were relatively discontinuous. On a regular basis, the group met only once a week for the Friday evening class. On some occasions the group met outside the class for additional training sessions, most typically when working toward a performance.

The age distribution within the group is between thirty and fifty years. The age distribution of participants external to *Café Reason* is between twenty-five and sixty years. Participants are middle-class professionals and students. Most members of the group have stable jobs and families to attend to. Only a few members live in Oxford, while most of them are scattered around Oxfordshire, in the towns of Kidlington and Woodstock, Hertfordshire and the Cotswolds. The fact that some of the members have to travel a long distance – one or even two hours – in order to get to a butoh class, shows their commitment to the practice. Distance certainly plays a role in the way *Café Reason* members interact and organize group activities. For example, performance projects involving the whole group usually have to be planned well in advance, in order to meet everybody's schedule. This usually happens on the occasion of monthly or bimonthly meetings, which are among the few occasions when members meet outside the class, while ordinary communications take place through e-mailing or phone calls.

Most members of *Café Reason* do butoh on a part time basis. Their involvement with dance and performance is motivated by personal fulfillment rather than by economic necessity. Still, some members of the group work in the arts or use creativity in their professions on a regular basis. Bitzia, for instance, is a full-time Yoga and a Classical Indian Dance teacher; Malcolm is a musician who plays in different bands as well as composing for them; he is also a university lecturer; Ana is a dance teacher as well as a dancer, choreographer, and dance film-maker. Jeannie is a dance therapist who works with people with learning disabilities. Ayala is a poet, as well as a graphic designer.

Based on the fact that the performers do not earn money from their performance work, *Café Reason* defines itself as a 'semi-professional' butoh group. The income from the Friday evening classes and from performance productions is used to organise workshops, to rent the Friday evening dance space, and to cover expenses for the performances (publicity, costumes, etc.). An administrative fee is paid to Ayala who, over the years, has acted as treasurer for the group. A symbolic fee is paid to the butoh teachers – usually Jeannie and Ana – for leading the Friday evening classes, and to the musician, that is, Malcolm, at the time he was still involved in the Friday evening butoh class.

3.2.5 Chronology of research

In October 2007 I started my M.Phil/Ph.D. on a full-time basis, meanwhile establishing contact with the Oxford-based butoh company *Café Reason*. At that time *Café Reason* was, as stated in their website, 'the only permanent butoh company in the UK' (*Café Reason* website).¹⁶

When I first met the group in 2007, *Café Reason* was indeed the only butoh company I had come across in the UK. They appeared to be relatively consistent in cultivating their own version of butoh through regular group training and performance work, while remaining open to inputs and collaborations with other local artists. The group welcomed new practitioners, so joining their weekly classes was not a problem for me.

¹⁶ http://cafereason.com/main/cafe_reason.htm, accessed in January 2008. After about three years another semi-permanent butoh group formed in London: the *London Butoh Asylum*. After this, *Café Reason* changed their website profile into 'the only permanent butoh company in the UK outside London' http://cafereason.com/main/cafe_reason.htm, accessed on January 23, 2012.

While the core members of the group can be identified because of their continuous participation in the classes, to an external observer, the distinction between *Café Reason* members, their associates,¹⁷ and regular participants in their training may not appear straightforward. To date, there is no tight definition of what becoming a member *Café Reason* means. In their website it is stated simply that

[t]he way in which people join *Café Reason* is an organic, rather than a formal one. New dancers are absorbed into the company by becoming regular, long-term attendees at class and (usually subsequently) by developing and performing work with us. The point at which someone is ready to perform depends on their level of experience and growth (and enthusiasm for lunatic adventures) and also on what we are trying to do at the time. ... Each person brings to the mix their unique life-history, body-form, and artistic contribution (*Café Reason* website).¹⁸

In *Café Reason*, a tension exists between openness to new people and group boundaries. Because of the group's generally welcoming attitude, new comers to the Friday evening classes become easily involved in their social life and activities. Also, when working towards a performance, the group tends to use the Friday evening classes for their explorations and rehearsals, so it is not unusual for new comers to find themselves involved in one of *Café Reason's* performance making sessions. However, new participants are

¹⁷ Despite his long-term professional involvement with the group, Malcolm was never considered a *Café Reason* 'member.' He remained an 'associate,' that is, somebody who has a long term interest in the group and collaborates with them. The fact that Malcolm never became a member is due to his being a musician rather than a dancer.

¹⁸ <http://cafereason.com/main/people.htm>, accessed on January 23, 2012.

usually excluded from the actual staging of a performance piece, for two main reasons: either because they do not have experience in performing, or because they have not built sufficient group connection and trust with *Café Reason* members.

In some cases, the ambivalence between inclusiveness and exclusiveness has been a source of confusion and misunderstanding. Ayala spells out the implications of this tension:

There is always a very difficult transition, because we are an open class that people come to, and it's always very difficult to decide: at what point do they become part of *Café Reason*? It's a sort of osmotic effect, where you've got *Café Reason*, you've got new people, and at some point the new person gets absorbed into *Café Reason*. Sometimes, for me, this happens prematurely. Jeannie, who is very different character, would say to a brand new person: 'How would you like to do a performance with us?'

There was a show once we were doing and we were worried we would not have enough people for this particular performance, which needed quite a lot of people. And *this* person brought his friends [having told them:] 'How would you like to be in a show?' And I said 'No, you can't do this! The people have been working together for a long time, they have got to know each other. They have got to know each others' bodies, they have got to know each others' movements, they have learnt a certain amount of trust...It's lovely that they come to class, but they can't automatically be in a performance.'

It always seems to work, because people do bring valuable stuff to performance and by doing performances they learn a lot, and after a point they are part of *Café Reason*. But it's tricky because at the same

time we are trying to present ourselves to the audience and to critics as a professional set up, so it can be worrying if there is somebody who is not at the right level yet. It can be difficult for us and for them, even though we try to say, 'This is an open group, we encourage new people.'

If we didn't do that, it would just be us old people, with no new inputs. It is wonderful to have the new energy and the different ways of moving and ideas of new people. So there is an ambivalence in it, there are good aspects and less good aspects. ... And then, just when you got to know somebody and you really want them for what they bring, they go! (Ayala, personal communication, audio recorded).

By mid-October 2007 I became involved in activities with *Café Reason* other than training. Around the same time, the group was developing ideas for a theatre performance, *Orpheus*, to take place the following May. Jeannie, who was the main choreographer for this piece, invited me to take part in it as a dancer – which confirms Ayala's version of Jeannie as being perhaps overly enthusiastic about having new people in *Café Reason*'s shows. I had gone through some butoh training the previous year, in London and in Japan, but I had never taken part in an actual theater piece. *Café Reason* however – as they later confirmed – considered my dance skills sufficiently developed to take part in this production. I welcomed the opportunity to take part in the project with them.

The fact that I felt included by *Café Reason* from the very beginning gave me confidence that I could carry out my research on 'butoh dance in the UK' with them. In a meeting held in December 2007 I formally asked the group to take part in my research project. They unanimously agreed, as well as showing their interest, and offering their support – which they did not fail to give in the following years.

My participant observation with *Café Reason* thus formally began in 2007, when I joined my first performance-making project with the group. This was *Orpheus*, which was performed the following May 2008 at the *Pegasus*. After joining this production, I was included in the group e-mail exchanges. Fairly soon I realized how crucial emails were for the communication among group members. In preparation for a performance, email exchange would usually become very intense. E-mails gave me an additional opportunity to keep track of relationships in the group. They helped me getting to know them, as well as being known by them.

Gradually I became more involved in the social life of the group. After class, we sometimes gathered outside the East Oxford Community Centre, where the classes were held. There, we chatted for a while, before moving to a local café, a pub, or to the house of one of the members of the group. Monthly or bi-monthly meetings were also an opportunity for social gathering: they usually took place at one of the members' houses in Oxford, and often resulted in dinner or lunch parties.

From October 2008, I became increasingly involved in performance work with this group. This included a semi-choreographed butoh piece commissioned by the *International Women Festival* in Oxford (February 2009); a bi-monthly performance scratch-night, called *Diamond Night* (organised by *Café Reason* but also involving other artists in the local community); and the theatre-production *Matrix* (May 2011). Towards the end of my second year of fieldwork, that is, in 2009, I was considered a 'member' of *Café Reason* by virtue of the fact I had participated in a major theatre production (*Orpheus*, 2008) and had been involved in several performance works with the group.

In practice, becoming a 'member' meant that, besides attending the weekly training, and working on performances, I would actively participate in meetings, as well as support *Café Reason's* endeavours in the form, for instance, of performance productions, butoh guerrillas, workshop organisation and attendance, and event publicity.

3.2.6 Leaving the field

I did not officially bring my fieldwork to a close. My involvement with the group went beyond the scope of my Ph.D. research: I became friends with my participants, a collaborator and, at times, an initiator of 'lunatic adventures' with them. I enjoyed spending time with the members of the group, talking about dance and performance, and on several occasions I felt that the group had become a second home, a place where I felt accepted. When coming to dance and performance, I felt we spoke a similar language. To the extent that 'the field' had become an extension of my life, I can easily relate to Goulet and Granville Miller's attitude towards fieldwork as an experiential, transformative endeavor:

As experiential ethnographers, we know that once engaged with our hosts in their lifeworld, we could not simply exit the field at a convenient time and declare the experience over and done with. Instead, we found out that the field was co-extensive with our homes, our minds, and our dreams, and involved even the bodies of our own family members and friends who were themselves sometimes affected and transformed by our ethnographic practice (Goulet and Granville Miller 2007, p. 4).

I found it difficult to carry out my research when I did not know people well. I worried about being perceived as though I was taking advantage of them, or using my relationship with them to achieve my research aims. In time, I discovered that the best way to carry out research for me was by establishing a sense of mutual trust and support with my informants. This was relatively easy because we shared a common interest in butoh: I was genuinely interested in their work and they seemed to be interested in mine. Flavia, for instance, after reading one of the early drafts of my thesis, said

‘your research is very important because we really need to understand more about butoh’ (Flavia, personal conversation, paraphrasing). Being a member of the group and dancing with them played a crucial role in laying the foundation of a relationship between me and my informants as based on shared interests, rather than one that was exclusively motivated by my research.

Once I started being more and more preoccupied with writing up, I naturally became less and less involved with *Café Reason*’s activities; I made it clear that writing my thesis was my priority, which they clearly understood. Nonetheless, I kept attending the Friday evening classes, and supporting to the group whenever I could, as I still do.

3.2.7 Other field-sites and training

While doing my fieldwork with *Café Reason* I also attended other butoh workshops and other types of dance or performance training. This is because I wanted to remain open to different versions of butoh and avoid being ‘naturalized’ to *Café Reason*’s version. I also wanted to learn as much as I could about performance making and what it entailed.

In London I attended butoh workshops organised by the non-profit organisation *Butoh UK*¹⁹ (former *London Butoh Network*) run by butoh dancer and choreographer Marie-Gabrielle Rotie: among the workshops I attended were the ones led by Ko Murobushi, Atsushi Takenouchi and Sayoko Onishi. In Oxford, I became involved with a number of performances which were not strictly classified as butoh: a contemporary dance project by Oxford-based

¹⁹ The organisation hosts about four workshops a year, for an average of twenty participants per workshop (Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, personal communication).

dancer and choreographer Paulette Mae (May 2009); the *Dive into Nature* project (July-November 2009), a collaboration between butoh and contemporary dancers conceived by performance artist Helen Edwards; and a device-theater performance with the company *Underconstruction Theater* (May 2010). In November 2009 I also embarked in some intensive performance workshops with performance artist Yael Karavan, leading to further training with her newly formed *Karavan Ensemble* in Brighton (January-February 2010). The work of Karavan, a unique blend of butoh with theatre and performance techniques, also influenced *Café Reason*, as I will discuss in Chapter Eight below.

Further influences on my work came from Professor Toshiharu Kasai, dance therapist at the Department of Clinical Psychology at Sapporo Gakuin University, also known as butoh dancer Morita Itto. Kasai visited the UK between July and December 2009, teaching butoh in London and Oxford. Kasai and I met several times to discuss about butoh. Apart from sharing some of his experiences as a performer, he offered me his insights into butoh from the perspective of his home discipline, that is, Psychology (for instance, Kasai 1999).

3.3 Research approach and methodology

3.3.1 Socio-sensory dimensions of fieldwork

In the course of my fieldwork, I soon became aware that the modalities of relations and interactions in the group *Café Reason* varied depending on whether those relations and interactions were taking place in, say, a training space, or outside of it, in the ‘real world.’ In seeking ways to handle my data, I distinguished two main types of social environments in *Café Reason*, based

on the prevailing 'socio-sensory' modalities at work. These were: A) non-dance situations, including meetings, parties, e-mail and phone communications, as shaped by and around a verbal mode of communication – spoken, written or both – and supported by sight and hearing as prevailing modes of attention; and B) dance situations, including training, workshops, retreats, rehearsals and performances, as shaped by and around physical contact and other non-verbal modes of interaction and communication.

The distinction outlined above served primarily the purpose of analysis. Normally, in fact, both verbal and non-verbal modalities of interaction characterise dance and non-dance situations. Thus, for instance, body language can be equally at work in a group meeting and a dance class in the form of 'natural units of interaction' (Goffman 1972), that are, '...that class of events which occurs during co-presence and by virtue of co-presence. ... the glances, gestures, positionings ... that people continuously feed into the situation whether intended or not. ...' (ibidem, p.1). *Vice versa*, verbal language usually complements body work in dance classes. Still, the balance between verbal and non-verbal registers changes from one context to another, according to the nature of the social interactions and activities around which a particular context is organised; thus, for instance, in a dance class, the focus ought to be on the *non-verbal*, rather than verbally-articulated contents, because the main interactions and activities around which a dance class comes into being is, indeed, *dance*.

Anthropologists of the senses have explored the notion that different social situations entail different types of sensory engagement. Elisabeth Hsu (2008), for instance, notes that: '[p]eople's sensory experiences (of their bodies and the environments they interact with) are specific to social situations' (ibidem, p. 433). Koen Stroeken (2008) argues that different social situations are characterised by an emphasis on particular sensory 'modes' of engagement – vision, hearing, touch, etc. – in accordance with the activities, interactions and

relationships specific to that social situation, and that the transition from one social situation to another may be accompanied by a 'sensory shift,' that is, a change from one prevailing sensory mode of engagement into another.

Because in this thesis I address the question of how *butoh* is done in the group *Café Reason*, I deliberately focused on dance-related contexts. This decision has led me to adjust the parameters of my participant observation so as to accommodate the type of sensory contents that those dance contexts entailed, especially kinesthetic contents. Thus, in the next sections, I will turn to the implications of my entering the field as an active participant and, above all, of my making use of kinesthetic awareness as an extension of participant observation in dance environments and relations.

3.3.2 The body as 'the field:' from 'participant observation' to 'radical participation'

As mentioned above, participant observation was adopted both in dance and non-dance contexts. In dance contexts, the parameters of participant observation were extended to those of 'thick participation' (Samudra 2008), which refers to highly participatory fieldwork methods in which the status of the researcher corresponds to that of an 'insider,' usually in the capacity of a practitioner (*ibidem*). In the case of my research, 'thick participation' articulated as participation in dancing, performing, devising dance pieces and, at later stages of my fieldwork, teaching *butoh*.

The strategy of being simultaneously researcher and practitioner took me into unexpected, non-ordinary cognitive domains, ruled by intuition, and by what Hastrup calls the 'eventness of being,' that is, the realisation that 'doing' and 'understanding' constitute an indivisible whole (Hastrup 2007, p. 194). To the extent that participant observation yielded such a sense of 'oneness' with the

‘field,’ I can further qualify my research approach as ‘radical participation,’ a term that emphasizes the experiential, transformative, and ecstatic dimensions of fieldwork (Goulet and Miller 2007, pp. 1-13).

The attitudes of constant self-assessment and of ‘being one’s own material’ that dance and performance generally demand changed my perception of my own body and self. In butoh classes, students are encouraged to pay attention to the presence and condition of their bodies at a given moment – ‘Where is your body in relation to the space?’ ‘What surfaces is your body in contact with?’ ‘What parts of your body want to speak?’ Butoh practitioners are also encouraged to ‘isolate body parts,’ that is, to focus on one body part at a time, and explore the movements of that particular body part, including those movements that take place at a level slightly beneath awareness. For instance, in a butoh class led by Itto Morita, we lie on the floor, and do nothing but wait for ‘spasms’ or other involuntary movements to occur.

In his study of capoeira, Downey pointed out how systematic training in a physical discipline can have a profound impact on one’s outlook. Skilled practice ‘means living, perceiving and coming to know through’ that very practice (Downey 2007, p. 228). As a consequence of butoh training, I also came to use my body differently on a daily basis, for instance by paying attention to kinesthetic content that I never noticed before. The range of movement ‘data’ varies greatly in butoh, encompassing the perception of movement variations in the body (an eye blinking, a hand trembling), in the environment (a current of air), as well as perceptual responses to sensory stimulation (a ray of light, a faint sound). By engaging with such information I became more aware of the rich sensory fabric that constitutes my surroundings. I became more connected to, and grounded in, my body. I discovered the ‘new,’ the ‘unusual,’ and the ‘other’ in my everyday life and in my own self.

The attitude of attending to sensory information, in its diversity, can provide a valuable research method *per se*. Ethnomusicologist Tomie Hahn (2007) speaks of using her training as a performer as a research method to approach the multi-sensory content of everyday actions. She describes, for instance, how an ordinary action such as drinking a glass of water can be turned into a performative ‘unit of observation’ (ibidem, p. 19):

Consider the negotiations of turning on the faucet and filling the glass with water – how do you coordinate the movements? Can you describe in detail your grasp and coordination of the glass as you bring it to your mouth? Then, do your lips move in preparation as the glass approaches? Do your glands react in expectation? How do you draw the water into your mouth and then swallow? Can you describe the movement quality? How about the feeling of the glass in your hand and the water flowing in your mouth? Has the visual focus of the water now vanished, as the water travels to a hidden vessel? What takes over after vision? Is the water cold? Are there smells, tastes, or sounds assisting you to engineer this performance? (Hahn 2007, p. 19)

Firstly, one has to delimit the ‘edges’ of the unit of observation, in other words define the in-points and out-points of the performative action. Then, in performing the action one should consider what movements are being enacted and in what order. It will thus become evident that the simple action of drinking a glass of water entails a series of smaller actions, as well as a rich fabric of multi-sensory information – i.e. the contact between the lips and the cold glass, the flowing of the fresh water into the hidden vessels (ibidem). Hence, through performance training, awareness of the multi-sensory content of experience that would normally take place at an unconscious level – one of ‘subsidiary attention’ (Polanyi 1963 [1958], pp. 50-58) – can be brought onto the conscious level of ‘focal attention’ (ibidem). In the language of performance work, to be examined in the following chapters, the latter

concept can be expressed through the verb ‘to notice’ or ‘to bring attention to’ determinate sensory contents.

In the next sections I will consider the notion of the body being used as a ‘research tool’ and as a paradigm to develop a ‘methodology of the senses.’ I draw the latter idea – i.e. of a methodology of the senses – from Hsu, for whom ‘[r]esearch on bodily dispositions and sensory experience cannot rely solely on interviews and questionnaires but calls for innovative forms of fieldwork. To be sure, participant observation does lend itself to a study of the senses’ (Hsu 2008, p. 439). In particular, I will talk about kinesthetic engagement as the core ‘radically participatory’ channel that I have adopted in my research to access the ‘invisible’ contents of butoh practice.

3.3.3 Toward a methodology of the senses: kinesthesia and kinesthetic engagement

Despite Mauss’ seminal work on ‘techniques of the body’ (Mauss 1979), it was only in the last decade of the 20th century that social scientists began cultivating an interest in the body as receptacle and a vehicle of cultural knowledge. Before then, the body had been assumed to be biological, universal and a-cultural (Samudra 2008, p. 666). Influenced by the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1981 [1962]) and of Bourdieu (1977), social scientists began investigating the possibility of gaining insight into the embodied dimension of culture by, for instance, learning the practical skills of the people they studied (Samudra 2008). Meanwhile, throughout the 90s, the new field of anthropology of the senses provided a space for criticism of the supposed visually-oriented Euro-American model, a ‘sensory bias’ that most (Western) ethnographers were seen as carrying into the field (Ong 1991). Despite the unprecedented interest in non-Western articulations of the sensorium (i.e. Stoller 1989; Howes 1991; Ingold 2000; Geurts 2002), studies of kinesthesia remained relatively scarce even within the sensory branch of anthropology, as

shown by the inconsistency of anthropological language that accounts for the 'somatic dimension of movement knowledge' (Sklar 2000, p. 70).

Some associated the dearth of kinesthetic accounts in anthropological literature with the nature of movement itself and of 'movement data' as typically *volatile* (Buckland 1999). For Farnell, anthropology has largely overlooked the significance of movement in social life, due to the fact that 'most anthropologists literally do not see body movement empirically' because of the 'lack [of] modes or registration or specification adequate to the task' (Farnell 1999, p. 345). She provocatively argues that visual technologies that anthropologists have extensively used to record movement, such as photography, might 'have had the unintended effect of removing *the medium of bodily movement itself* from serious consideration as a component of social action' (Farnell 1994, p. 929, my emphasis). In fact, visual technologies direct the viewer's attention to the outer, visible dimensions of movement, at the expense of the 'invisible' kinesthetic ones.

Whereas anthropology has generally overlooked the moving body, in dance ethnography, a 'kinesthetic trajectory' stemmed from dance methodology itself (Sklar 2000, p. 70), leading to a new interest in the subject. Accounts of kinesthesia as, for example, a directly felt experience of moving (e.g., Sklar, *ibidem*), and a culturally-situated definition of the moving body (e.g., Potter 2008, p. 444) began to emerge. 'Kinesthetic' authors point out that one of the difficulties of approaching kinesthesia is that one does not experience a 'straightforward' sensory modality as with, say, hearing or seeing. This is because kinesthesia does not pertain to a specific sense organ, but rather, all sense organs have, to a certain extent, a kinesthetic function.

Anthropologist Caroline Potter argues that ‘far from an isolated sense with discrete biological pathways, kinaesthesia²⁰ requires parallel perception through multiple sensory modes ...’ (Potter 2008, p. 444). Kinesthesia can be understood as an integrated perceptual system ‘...that encompasses not only the workings of specific sense organs (such as proprioceptors in the muscles and semicircular canals in the inner ear), but also the integration of the moving body’s intentions and information from other sensory channels’ (ibidem, p. 460). Psychologist Gibson (1966) defines ‘*kinesthesia*’ ‘for what it literally denotes – the pickup of movement’ (ibidem, p. 111) and argues that all sensory organs in the body have some degree of kinesthetic function, that is, all sensory organs detect movement in one measure or another. Thus, kinesthesia may refer to ‘articular, vestibular, cutaneous, visual’ kinesthesia – according to which sense organ, or which combinations of sense organs are registering the movement (ibidem). Since several sense organs register movement at the same time, it may appear artificial to try to separate them. However, in this thesis, an analytical approach to movement is deemed necessary to approximate a dancer’s fine-tuned knowledge of movement. For instance, dancer and philosopher Sheets-Johnstone (2011[1999]) contends that ‘*kinesthesia* is a *bona fide* sensory modality in its own right’ and that, as such, should not be confused with proprioception, which has ‘*to do preeminently with the experience of movement through bodily deformations*’ (ibidem, p. 512, original emphasis). That is, while proprioception is a positional sense, kinesthesia is a movement sense. As distinctive sensory modalities, kinesthesia and proprioception entail different sensory dimensions, the perception of one’s position lacking the aspect of dynamic three-dimensionality and flow that specifies the perception of self-movement (ibidem, p. 511).

²⁰ Different authors spell this word differently. In this thesis I adhere to Sklar’s format (2000): ‘kinesthesia’ and ‘kinesthetic.’

Another important aspect to kinesthesia is its 'doubleness.' As a dance ethnographer, Deidre Sklar explains that kinesthesia is different from other sensory modalities in that, when moving 'one does and feels oneself doing at the same time' (ibidem, p. 72). This 'double act of moving and feeling oneself moving' creates an 'ultimate intimacy' with oneself (ibidem) that, to Potter, is crucial to dancers' 'construction of self and identity' (Potter 2008, p. 461). Potter argues that a 'simultaneously subjective and objectified body' is a key notion emerging from a highly sophisticated sense of movement as it is prioritised in dance communities (ibidem, p. 452). Sheets-Johnstone also argues that kinesthesia has a 'double mode of reality,' one 'definitively felt' and the other 'definitively perceived' (2011[1999], p. 515). She describes this as 'internal' and 'external' kinesthesia respectively, with the former referring to the perception of self-movement as a qualitatively-inflected felt dynamic (ibidem, p. 516), and the latter to the perception of self-movement as a three-dimensional dynamic unfolding in and through interaction with an environment (ibidem, p. 120; pp. 516-517).

Writing from a phenomenological perspective, Sheets-Johnstone laments that recent scholarly interest in the body has not been accompanied by the development of an analytical language of movement. On the contrary, language remains limited or altogether inadequate when it comes to describing the dynamic aliveness of being (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, pp. 119-126; 2011[1999], pp. 490-495; 2009, pp. 363-364). The notion of 'embodiment' with all its derivatives is, in this respect, no more than a 'lexical band-aid,' which does not heal the divide that permeates our thinking around the moving body. 'In reality, we do not experience ourselves or others as *packaged* [as the notion of 'embodiment' suggests] We experience ourselves first and foremost as alive, moving and being moved in and by the world around us' (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 119, original emphasis). Hence, the difficulty of studying movement does not lie in the 'exquisitely volatile' nature of movement *per se* (ibidem 2011[1999], p. 132), but in the failure to

recognise that our primordial sense-making is rooted in movement, and that we live and make sense to ourselves and the world through the 'dynamic intercorporeality' of our bodies (2011 [1999], pp. 490-495; 2009, pp. 363-364; pp. 510-515). That is, the primacy traditionally given to language and to semantic meaning is misleading for, '[i]f anything, *language is post-kinetic*' (2011[1999], p. 438, original emphasis). To correct this tendency, Sheets-Johnstone continues, we need to turn the attention 'to us ourselves' (2011[1999], p.114) and to the reality of self-movement: what she calls a 'phenomenology of kinesthetic consciousness' (ibidem, p. 130). Methodologically, this requires an effort to 'unlearn the body' or to learn our bodies anew, so that even the most habitual movement can become strange: 'By making the familiar strange, we familiarize ourselves anew with the familiar' (ibidem, p. 123). This renewed attention to movement can become the foundation of a new epistemology of being, grounded in kinesthesia as a methodological attitude to approach the primal reality of animation (2011[1999], pp. 193-233).

3.3.4 Kinesthetic engagement as a research method

We learned by listening, by being and staying attuned kinesthetically.
(Sheets-Johnstone 2011[1999], p. 194).

In my research, a 'methodology of the senses' and of kinesthetic attention developed out of my participation in butoh and performance work. Movement training allowed me to develop what Csordas (1993) would refer to as a 'somatic mode of attention' in the form of an enhanced kinesthetic awareness. Sklar (2000) speaks of the latter as an ability of 'dropping down into the body' (ibidem, p. 72) and, also, as a research method, which can be used to attend to the types of information and knowledge that circulate in dance environments:

Movement training accustoms us to distinguishing nuances between dynamics, feeling them as kinetic sensation, seeing them in others' moves, and recognizing their reverberations in words. Our bodies become laboratories for experimentation with kinetic details. While dancers may normally perform these cross-modal extrapolations without conscious attention, ethnographic researchers reach for it, aiming, as Ness writes, for the "enduring patterns of learned collective experience" (Sklar 2000, p. 72).

A kinesthetic approach reveals that dance forms are not just systems of organized steps or movements but also systems of organized sensations. Novack (1990) and Ness (1992) show from two different perspectives how dance ethnographers use personal movement experiences '...not so much to facilitate description of particular steps or choreographies, as to understand the way sensation itself is organized....' (Sklar 2000, p. 70). For instance, Samudra (2008), a scholar and practitioner of White Crane Silat, a Chinese Indonesian self-defence and health movement system, reports that after years of practice, she knows 'by subtle sensations' when she is executing a movement correctly (ibidem, p. 671). The correct enactment of a movement is based on sensation as opposed to being based on the 'shape' or 'form' of the movement: 'This kind of description suggests an order of bodily knowledge that is informed more by sensual quality than by form or shapes in space' (ibidem). Also, Potter, in her ethnographic account of a contemporary dance school in London, reports that kinesthesia was used among British-trained dancers not only to correctly perform bodily actions but also 'as a means of perceiving progress and bodily change' (Potter 2008, p. 452).

Sheets-Johnstone contends that discussion of movement as sensation prevents the recognition of the complex dynamic experience of movement as a three-dimensional phenomenon (2011[1999], pp. 511-513). She points out that movement is not a matter of sensation but of dynamics. That is,

movement differs from sensation spatio-temporally: while sensations are spatially pointillist and temporally punctual bodily events, movement is an 'ongoing spatio-temporal-energetic dynamic,' a three-dimensional 'flow' or a 'dynamic streaming' (ibidem, p. 511). While analytically interesting, this distinction should be accepted with caution. In fact, what Sheets-Johnstone describes as the 'imaginary consciousness of movement,' can take different forms depending on the kinesthetic system in question. Different dance forms conceptualise movements in different terms, according to different spatio-temporal parameters. I argue that the description of movement as a 'dynamic streaming' suits best the description of dance systems like contemporary dance and ballet, which privilege ample, gestural, and dynamic movements. By contrast, *butoh* emphasizes subtle bodily changes.

In the discussion of the next chapters I shall propose that, in *butoh*, an extended notion of kinesthesia applies, which encompasses other sensory modalities. Since we know that the content and enumeration of the 'senses' varies culturally (Classen 1997, p. 401), we should be able to accept the idea that movement is not a clear-cut sensory modality but one liable to cross-cultural and cross-genre variations.

As I have already mentioned, in contrast with other dance forms, *butoh* is not a system of prescribed forms, stances or movements. A commonly held notion among *butoh* practitioners is that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way of dancing. Nevertheless, in the process of dancing *butoh*, both in training and performance settings, certain ways of moving are understood as more 'effective' than others, both in terms of how they 'felt,' and of how an audience would respond to the dance (i.e. through feedback). In the course of my fieldwork I had various 'breakthroughs' into proprioceptive and kinesthetic understanding, the most fundamental of which I describe in Chapter Seven of this thesis. But, in fact, it took me years – the whole length of my fieldwork – to learn how to fix those volatile sensuous insights into something substantial

that I could access at will. In this respect, learning how to dance has meant learning how to feel, as in Samudra's phrase 'a correct movement is performed not by the shape of the form but by subtle sensation' (2008, p. 671). Toward the end of my fieldwork, I became more confident of my grasp of butoh, which has been central in my ability to write about it. I was now able to 'see' the dance of my fellow dancers: the patterns of energy in their bodies, the shifts of weight, the effort in their muscles and articulations, their 'character' and 'style,' as well as recurring qualities and tendencies when dancing.

Kinesthetic attention developed as a by-product of butoh practice, then. 'Full immersion' in training and performance work allowed my body to be altered by the experience (Samudra 2008, p. 677) and to absorb the embodied parameters of practice. This process was not, of course, free from emotional investment: in the course of intensive training I often experienced frustration and being at a loss about what the teacher was asking us to do. In those moments I would often feel inadequate and wanted to run away. However, in those moments, the thought that we were essentially 'playing' saved me from taking myself too seriously. Also, allowing myself to stay with a prevailing sense of frustration, fear or tiredness often resolved into exhilarating moments in which doing without thinking became the only available form of knowing. Comments made by different dancers suggest strongly that those same feelings would have been experienced by anyone doing butoh, not just a researcher doing butoh: *they are about doing butoh*.

3.3.5 Kinesthetic variations: the moving body in butoh and in contemporary dance

Potter defines kinesthesia as ‘a dynamic sense of constantly shifting one’s body in space and time in order to achieve a desired end,’ as well as a ‘general ability to feel the motion of one’s own body and to adjust it in culturally preferred ways’ (Potter 2008, p. 449). She describes how, among British-trained contemporary dancers, kinesthesia mainly relates to a ‘heightened appreciation for one’s relationship with gravity’ (ibidem, p. 450). ‘Through training she [a dancer] learns to feel her dancing body’s relationship to gravity at a number of levels – from active resistance when fully upright to total submission when her body weight is released to the ground’ (ibidem). The implicit relationship of a human body to gravity becomes ‘focal knowledge’ among contemporary dancers, also aided by the language used in training (ibidem).

I have little, if any, knowledge of contemporary dance, but it occurs to me that contemporary dance and butoh might differ kinesthetically. More precisely, while both styles of dance share a ‘heightened appreciation for one’s relationship with gravity’ (ibidem, p. 450),²¹ the main difference between the two lies in the way they use movement in relation to space and time.

At the end of the second year of my fieldwork I took part in a dance piece by Oxford-based dancer and choreographer Paulette Mae. She had just joined a few butoh classes and suggested that I dance in one of her choreographies. I trusted her judgment, but felt compelled to warn her that I had no experience of contemporary dance, as I had only trained in butoh. She reassured me by saying that she generally uses different types of ‘energy’ in her work, and that

²¹ I further discuss butoh dancers’ relationship with gravity in Chapter Five, section 5.2.

anyway she does not believe in such boundaries as 'contemporary' as opposed to 'butoh' dance.

The first time we went through the choreography together, I felt that she was not looking *at* me, but rather *through* me: Paulette was not interested in the shape of what I was doing; instead, she would insist that I learnt the choreography by 'feeling the energy of the movement,' as opposed to worrying about what the movement looked like. On more than one occasion she used imagery and metaphoric language to stimulate my engagement with a given action.

Below is an example of what Paulette's instructions sounded like (from some notes I took after one of the rehearsals):

In the walk, you should be focusing on one point – i.e. on the floor, some feet away from you – and walk towards that point.

At each step, your weight pushes forward [as though] your feet have their own will.

As you stop and look up, you suddenly see something...like...a small bird on the window or...

As you see that [and you are surprised], keep that movement [of surprise] for a moment, breathe in, so that your shoulders will go up and then [as you breathe out] they will relax down...

In following the breathing, go down, easily, feeling the straightness of your spine...

After taking half-a-step, I was supposed to fall:

Thigh and knee open and, as you keep moving, your weight is transferred...

*Now step ... as if by mistake, as though you were not sure,
so that you fall....*

Because I could not stop thinking of how to get to that point of falling, we devised a way for me to actually lose my balance and fall. Paulette instructed me as follows:

Kick the right knee with the left leg and keep pushing [the right knee against the left leg] so that you go off balance and fall, at which point you have to catch yourself [in order not to hurt yourself]!

Paulette's method was similar to *butoh* in that it emphasized the 'energy' or 'quality' rather than the 'shape' of a movement; also, in that she used image-based language – i.e. a small bird on the window – to conjure up different energies or qualities of movement. However, while *butoh* imagery is typically situated in the dancer's body or in its immediate surrounding, Paulette's images – a point on the floor, a bird/a window up on the wall – are located at a distance. She uses 'corporeal' images related to the body's physiology (the movement/directionality of the breath, the straightness of the spine). I argue that different types of kinesthetic imagery are likely to engender different qualitatively-inflected movement dynamics. Imagery has implications not only for the type of kinesthetic awareness at work – e.g. internal or external (Sheets-Johnstone 2011[1999], pp. 510-521), close-range or projectional – but also for the spatio-temporal dimension to its unfolding. While spatio-temporal structuring, for instance through music, can specify a particular dance genre, a certain temporality is always apparent in movement conceived as an unfolding dynamic theme with variations (Sheets-Johnstone 2011[1999], p. 131; 516).

Similarly, dance anthropologist Roderyk Lange (1975) argues that 'rhythm' is inherent in the constitution of the human body and its immersion in the world:

[t]he concept of rhythm stems from our experience of basic bodily actions connected with the use of weight in space and time. After going “down” one has to go “up” in order to be able to move further. This has already formed natural sequences of stresses. The symmetrical nature of the body also imposes basically repetitive patterns of movement. One good illustration of this principle can be observed in the manner in which a man walks: “left-right, left-right.” (ibidem, p. 28)

In Paulette's piece, distinctive movement sensations followed one another in a solidly built sequence, though, of course, there were also pauses. Kinesthetic attention was directed to the perception of kinetic energy ‘flowing’ through rhythmically stressed movement phrases. The dynamic of that flow was firmly established either in relation to the music or through counting – that is, through a marked sense of time as measured in identical units, or ‘metrical rhythm’ (Lange 1975, p. 28). In contrast to this approach, *butoh* dancers typically direct their attention towards subtle movement sensations, trusting those sensations, and how they evolve. To the extent that they put emphasis on movement sensation as manifold processes, rather than on marked time, *butoh* dancers can be seen as following physiological, organic or ‘free rhythm’ (ibidem, p. 30).

I will further explore the use of time in *butoh* in Chapter Eight, which concerns the use of *butoh* in performance. Meanwhile, to sum up, I have argued that in Paulette's work (which I have reported as an example of contemporary dance) and in *butoh* different rhythms originated from different ways of allocating motion through arbitrarily set time spans. On the basis of my discussion, I suggest that the two styles of dancing displayed diverging kinesthetic attitudes, that is, they differed in their use of the ‘dynamic sense of constantly shifting one’s body in space and time in order to achieve a desired end’ (Potter 2008, p. 449).

3.4 Recording data

3.4.1 Note- and image- taking

Among researchers of 'kinaesthetic cultures' (Samudra 2008), that is, of sub-cultures based on shared bodily practices, a common problem remains: how to record 'thick participatory' (ibidem) and somatic experiences and translate them into data.

Samudra (2008 pp. 677-678) and Sklar (2000 pp. 73-74) give various examples of strategies adopted by researchers in kinesthetic cultures to first record and later analyse bodily experiences. Sklar (2000) suggests that words can engage kinetic sensibilities by means of their 'somatic reverberations:' 'Dipping into memory from a space of somatic attention, one can allow the permutations of "thoughtforms," including kinetic sensations, to *take* form as words (or pictures, or choreography)' (ibidem, p. 74, Sklar's italics). Samudra (2008) illustrates three different strategies for dealing with 'thick participatory' fieldwork: kinesthetic details, sensory impressions, and somatic narratives (ibidem, p. 677). She also argues that an ethnographer of kinesthetic cultures needs to develop a vocabulary for noting movements (ibidem, p. 669).

In my project, participant observation notes were taken almost exclusively in the form of words. As for 'thick participatory' notes, I found that the method that worked best for me was drawing or sketching the bits of the practice that seemed most relevant, and writing a few words to provide important details. I found that images would convey the physical experience and the processes of dancing more immediately than words could. Thus, images constituted my primary mnemonic device, while verbal descriptions were added at a second stage to provide more fine-grained detail. When possible, I took such thick

participatory notes at home, soon after the training sessions. Also, the image-based logic of butoh practice often helped with the sketching. Other times I would try to recall the practice directly with my body, i.e. by re-enacting an exercise, or by remembering my experience of it with my body. When doing this I would have my notebook at hand so to be able to almost immediately jot down notes or sketches of the exercise.

3.4.2 Other forms of recording data

Other methods that were used included audio and video-recording, interviews and questionnaires.

On a few occasions, I used audio recording to integrate my note taking, particularly in the case of workshops or rehearsals, or other occasions when it was difficult to take notes. At a time when my main research focus was on butoh imagery, audio recording was instrumental in retrieving the exact words used by a teacher during the practice. Because it is the teacher who does most of the talking during the practice, it was crucial to receive his or her permission to audio record. I would approach the teacher first and, if I got his or her permission, I would then inform the rest of the group of my intention to audio-record the class: I would do this by sending a group email a few days in advance, and also by reminding the participants before starting the session. Generally, audio recording did not provoke any disruption or annoyance to the training context.

On a couple of occasions I brought a video camera to the training. On one occasion, it was when a teacher external to *Café Reason*, Macarena Ortuzar, had been invited to lead the weekly class. On this occasion, I had obtained formal permission to video record the practice both from the teacher and the group. However, it happened that new people, who had never come to butoh

class before, turned up. When I explained to them that I had been given permission to film the class because of my research, one of them was still not convinced. The argument was that they were coming to class (paraphrasing) to freely express themselves, and that the camera felt as if they were being examined. Having explained that the footage was for my private viewing only, the person in question seemed convinced. Thus, I carried on with the filming. Later during the class, however, when we were about to do a group improvisation, the same person told me that she felt uncomfortable being filmed during the improvisation. At that point I just turned the camera off. After that occasion, I reflected on the extent to which the presence of a video camera can disrupt the atmosphere of a butoh class, which is usually perceived as intimate and safe. From that point on, I stopped videoing the training.

Video recording was adopted more easily in the context of rehearsals. In these cases, video-recording was considered useful by the group. Ana, for instance, would encourage me to film a rehearsal and then asked me if I could give her have a copy of the footage to revise the piece. On more than one occasion, when *Café Reason* was preparing material for a performance, I was asked by the group if I could film the practice so that they could revise the work and/or edit the footage to create short film project that they would use in performance or for documenting the practice.

3.5 Issues emerging during the research

As already discussed, in approaching butoh as an object of study, one is faced with the issue of its multiple manifestations. This heterogeneity also characterized *Café Reason*, where individual dancers tend to develop their own style of dancing. While the group as a whole shared a common interest in butoh, the time and energy that individual members invested into it varied.

Some members would only do butoh in the weekly classes and in preparation for a performance. Others would undertake further training outside the weekly classes; some people engaged in collaborations or in performance work with other artists or groups.

In this thesis, some members' names of the group recur more often than others. This reflects the fact that in training and in rehearsals some people appeared to have more prominent roles than others. In describing the weekly class, for instance, I would often focus on the person leading the training. In the context of performance, I would focus on the choreographers rather than the dancers, unless a dancer was also a choreographer. Also, there was an implicit hierarchy in the group, with Jeannie and Ana the main butoh teachers and also the main choreographers. Similarly, in performance work, although everybody's opinion was welcomed, it was clear that Jeannie, Ana and Ayala played the crucial decision-making roles.

3.6 Doing anthropology 'at home'

I lived in Oxford throughout my fieldwork. I never formally disengaged from the field, due to the coincidence of geographical location between the 'field' and the place in which I was carrying out my research. I kept going to classes even while writing up, as I felt I had created a bond with my informants based on a shared interest in butoh which went beyond the purposes of the research itself. Furthermore I felt that butoh dance had become a valuable part of my life.

Living in shared accommodation in Oxford and leading a student life while carrying out my fieldwork made me similar to the participants in my research: they also had their own private lives, jobs, and homes to return to. Thus, the fact that my 'immersion' in the field was not total or continuous is consistent

with the nature of the field, and the social relations it entailed. Meanwhile, the long-term duration of the fieldwork compensated for the general discontinuity of the ethnographic encounters.

3.7 Confidentiality in using video and audio recording

Café Reason was fully aware of my research. Unanimous permission to conduct the research was given by the group at one of their meetings.

When using video or audio recording I started out by asking people to sign consent forms. However, it became clear that participants did not like signing forms. One of the participants expressively said once: 'You can film the class, but please don't make me sign a form.' So I changed approach to asking permission by sending group emails and asking them to reply to the email (i.e. just by saying 'yes' or 'agree,' or 'no' or 'I disagree') so that I could retain this as a proof of permission.

When conducting interviews, I also made it clear that the information provided might be used for my research. On several occasions I sent to the group drafts of the chapters I was writing where they had been quoted, to make sure they felt comfortable with those quotes and asking them for their comments and feedback. (Even though people had agreed in principle, I always tried to make sure they agreed with the context in which they were quoted, and with what I was quoting). However, this process has not been as thorough as I would have liked it to be, partly because of the lack of feedback response from my participants and partly because of the lack of time during the writing process.

3.8 Recapitulation and conclusion

I have described the processes of research undertaken in the execution of this project including: matters of confidentiality in dealing with my informants, description of the case study and of the fieldwork process and chronology, research approach and research methodologies. One reason this is important is that the literature on butoh so far does not provide an ethnographic account of butoh practitioners. In particular there were no ethnographies derived from findings obtained through participant observation with butoh dancers in their spaces and times.

In my fieldwork with *Café Reason*, participant observation was extended to participation in dance and performance work with this group. I also undertook further butoh and non-butoh training and performance outside *Café Reason* to gain a wider sense of butoh and performance practice in the UK. Working with a number of butoh and non-butoh teachers and practitioners has given me additional points of reference and comparison for my research.

I have outlined the centrality of a kinesthetic approach to my project and how this approach also had a significant impact on my personal life. My direct involvement in butoh dancing has, in time, engendered an enhanced kinesthetic awareness. Nonetheless, my drawing on anthropological and philosophical works on kinesthesia has supported the development of an analytical language able to address perceptual and socio-cultural dimensions to movement and, so, fulfill the aims of my research.

The investigation of butoh training and performance that I carry out in the following chapters relies on both the methodological dimensions of kinesthetic 'experience' and the 'analysis' that I have pursued in this chapter. In fact, while an enhanced kinesthetic sense is a precondition to a systematic study of dance and other movement cultures, this is not *per se* sufficient to create

anthropological knowledge. The process of translating kinesthetic and other types of sensory knowledge into ethnographic data and, later, into anthropological theory, is just as important an aspect, and is one of the main challenges of the writing process.

PART I: BUTOH IN TRAINING

In Chapter Two I explained that the purpose of my thesis is to investigate the perceptual constitution of the butoh body and the socio-cultural significances that are attached to it. Because I assumed 'body' and 'movement' to be the most basic constituents of butoh dance, I also resolved that a 'kinesthetic approach' that drew on the aspects of 'perception' and of 'practice' (Csordas 1990) would be most suitable to tackle the topic. The centrality of sensory, and specifically kinesthetic, data to my investigation led me to further narrow down the field of inquiry to dance (as opposed to non-dance) environments, with and through the company *Café Reason*.

Dance environments encountered in my fieldwork were of two main kinds: 1) training-related dance contexts, and 2) performance-related dance contexts. These two contexts differed from a socio-sensory point of view. This distinction is reflected in my thesis, which is divided in two 'parts.' Part I is devoted to butoh in training, while Part II, to butoh in performance.

Part I is concerned with describing the sensory contents of a butoh training environment. Here, I build on my core hypothesis of the perceptual constitution of the butoh body as a cultural object *through training*. In the course of my discussion I explore the sensory contents of butoh training and the social significances that are attached to them (Chapter Four); criticize the notion, found among butoh practitioners as well as in non-anthropological literature on butoh, that butoh dance coincides with a process of 'desocialisation' of the body (Chapter Five); and identify the emergence of a 'butoh sensorium' through the use of imagery and language in training (Chapter Six).

CHAPTER FOUR

4 Sensory contents of a butoh dance class

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I introduce a Friday evening butoh dance class with *Café Reason*. This was the primary dance context where I gathered data for my research. Through a combination of approaches from the anthropology of dance and the anthropology of the senses, I direct my attention to the sensory contents of the class and the significances that participants attach to such contents. In particular, I examine how sensory contents are articulated throughout the class' interactions and activities, and through the teacher's use of words and imagery.

4.2 Time and space of a Café Reason butoh class

Members of *Café Reason* meet every Friday evening at the first floor of the East Oxford Community Centre. As stated in the group website: 'Café Reason holds weekly classes: no experience necessary, just a willing body and an open mind.'²² The A4 poster advertising the class is permanently up on a notice board in the EOCC main hall, alongside other posters and flyers advertising yoga, aikido, and reggae gigs.

A *Café Reason* butoh class lasts about two hours, from 7 to 9 pm. The number of participants varies, as the class is open to all and, from time to

²² <http://cafereason.com/main/classes.htm>, accessed on January 28, 2012.

time, new people join the training. In the four-year period I attended the classes, either Jeannie or Ana were teaching. When for some reason neither of them could teach, another member of *Café Reason* would lead the training.

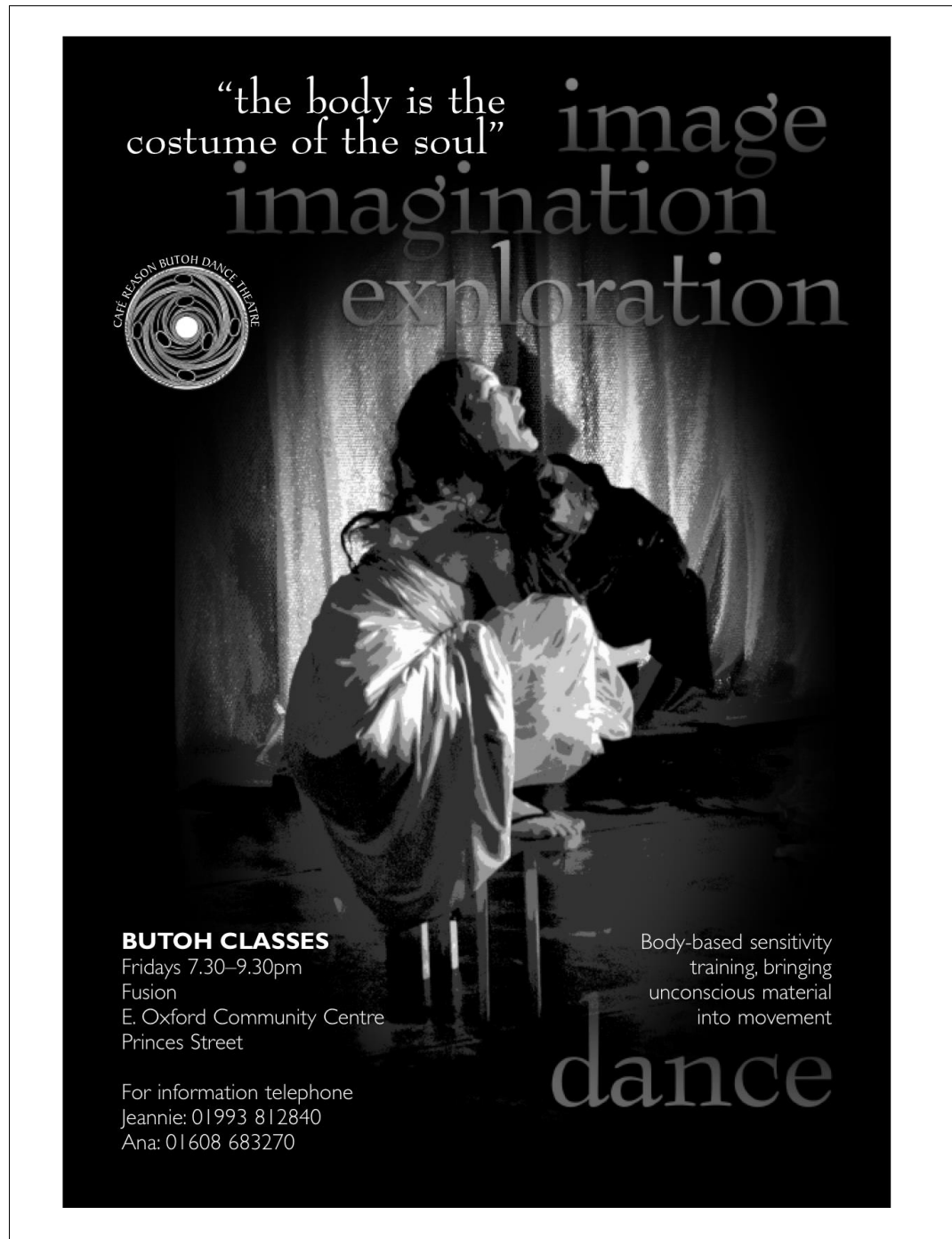


Plate 2: Café Reason butoh classes, poster design by Ayala Kingsley

Each person has a personal take on butoh, and brings different techniques to the training. The warming-up constitutes quite a substantial part of the class, taking from 30 to 45 minutes, and it is an example of the 'hybrid' nature of the session: it includes techniques from yoga, tai-chi, qi-gong, shintaido, physical theatre, according to who is leading and his or her experience of physical training. Both Ana and Jeannie have developed their own styles of warming-up, which mix basic yoga poses with breathing and imagery-based techniques. In some cases the warm up can take the form of free movement improvisation – as I am going to describe in the next section – where it is up to each participant 'to find their bodies,' with the teacher intervening from time to time to give generic directions.

The space of the practice is a wide general-purpose hall with red floor, with three large deforming mirrors at the walls. The presence of mirrors is an exception to other butoh contexts where mirrors are typically barred, in order not to visually distract practitioners from their engaging with movement. In this case, mirrors are just part of the space. The floor is not a typical dance floor. It is harder than a conventional dance floor and gets quite cold in winter. Because the space is used by other people and for other purposes than dance, we sometimes find at the beginning of the class that the floor is dirty and needs some sweeping up before the practice.

4.2.1 Entering the space of the class

It is Friday evening at 7pm. Upon entering the East Oxford Community Centre, climbing up the wooden stairs, and crossing the threshold that gives into the training hall, I realise the contrast between outside – a Friday evening fuss on Cowley Road – and the inside – the enclosed, focused dimension of a butoh class that is about to start. Out there, people walk, hang out, and hurry

up. Students carry their groceries, their arms pulled to the ground by the carrier bags. A couple holds hands and smiles; a man takes money out of a cash machine, shielding the transaction with his back; a young woman's thumbs run across her cell phone's keyboard, texting somebody. A guy smokes a cigarette right outside the pub's main entrance; others hold pints of beer while speaking loudly and excitedly: as they laugh, their eyes meet. Teenagers queue up outside one of the most popular venues in the area; some of them sitting on the pavement, others crouching against a wall. Bodies travel across the public space, hesitating at the traffic light, tracing diagonals across the street, cruising on bikes. A bus brakes: passengers get off and on.

Inside the classroom, it is quiet, focused. At one side, Malcolm sets up his keyboard, amplifier, effects pedals, microphone and other music gear. Dancers' bodies, scattered around the room, are already moving freely: lying on the dance floor, rolling across, stretching and warming-up, each one in his or her own way and time. Ana is teaching today and she often gives some time for free-movement. She is with the others, her back on the floor, hands and feet drawing circles in the air.

She turns towards me, her eyes greeting me. I turn towards Malcolm to say Hi; he is standing at one side of the room, fully engaged in the world of sound he generates: he is holding a violin with his chin and left arm, while the right hand slides the bow across the chords. He's *looping* – recording melodies and repeating them – and over-layering melodies as he goes. Nobody is talking: only the music, interweaving with the movement and the sound of deep breathing, fill the space.

While moving, Ana just says:

Do what your body wants to do.

I get changed into my training clothes, and leave my bag with the rest of the bags at one corner of the room. When coming from the 'outside world,' it usually takes me some time to switch into a 'butoh mode.' I often allow myself some time of complete stillness, to let my mind 'arrive,' and 're-set' for the practice. As the level of physical involvement and of sensorial engagement increases, I move from a place of *resistance* to one of *engagement*. This transition usually takes place gradually: I lie with my back against the floor, my knees bent, eyes pointing at the ceiling, and I notice the pace of my breathing – was I running? – I keep 'noticing it' as it gradually slows down. For a while this is the only movement I am interested in. Once I have 'found' my own breath, I probe the state of my articulations by lifting arms and legs and drawing little circles in the air, rocking slightly, and pouring all the weight of my limbs onto my back that is being supported by the floor. Having stretched my limbs, I turn my body onto one side, and look at what the others are doing.

Shaking, stamping, stretching, gliding, rolling, walking, jumping, breathing, turning, twisting. I enjoy when the class begins with free movement because it is a snapshot of the different 'energies' that people carry from the outside world into the training room. Wide or small movements, open or contained, careful or bold, each body carries different qualities, and different moods. Some people prefer the floor, others already experiment with heights. I am still on the ground, still 'arriving.' I have shifted into the 'child pose' of yoga – facing the floor in a fetal position – hips and knees bent with the sheen on the floor, chest resting on my knees, my forehead on the floor, pouring the weight on my back, neck and shoulders onto the ground. Ana says:

Keep your awareness of the other bodies in space.

It is time for me to get with the rest of the group. Pushing my hands and feet on the ground, I move onto four and, as I push my pelvis high and relax my

neck down, I start moving closer to the group; I take advantage of this pose to shift my weight from one limb to another and continue stretching as I cross the space. Having found my spot in space, I shift the weight back and down into a squatting position, leaving the upper part of the body and the arms relaxed; finally, by pressing the feet against the floor while keeping my knees slightly bent, I roll my spine up to complete standing.

Watch the space between you and the others. Watch the ripples that your and others' bodies are sending through the space.

Let the ripples reach you. You don't need to react to them, just be aware of them.

The image of ripples triggers a *feeling of water* encompassing the whole physical space in the room. Bodies are nearly still, moving delicately, carefully: they are aware that the tiniest movement can generate ripples that are bound to travel across the space. As I stand still, ripples of water tickle my skin. Meanwhile, the image of *floating* evokes lightness in my limbs.

We are standing at the bottom of the sea.

One of my arms reaches up to the vast space – a *mass of water* – above me, feeling the verticality, depth and density of it. As I do this, another person – Adam – who is in front of me, also lifts his arm. Like a set of dominoes, all the other dancers lift one arm in their own time. Not a word is uttered. Bodies, scattered in water-space, each one with one arm lifted. It is very common that, as we begin to relate to one another as physical bodies, we enter patterns of form and of rhythm, create analogies, symmetries and synchronies, or go against them. This experience of immersion, of being-in-the-space and being aware of the other bodies and the space recalls Ingold's 'dwelling' perspective, which identifies a state of reciprocal receptivity and ultimate interconnection between man and environment (Ingold 2000, pp.

153-156). In the context of a butoh class, this condition is understood as a sensory fabric punctuated by 'rhythmic interrelations' and 'patterns of resonance' (Ingold 2000, p. 154).

The all-encompassing notion of 'awareness' that Ana used reveals that not just a single sensory mode, but a multi-layered perception of the environment is at work.

Keep moving around, keep being aware of each other's presence, responding or not responding to one another. As you move across the space, if it happens to meet another body, stop and stay together for a moment, before you resume your journey through the space.

We keep moving around the space, which is dense with movement and sound. Bodies are shifting, sliding, twisting. 'To be aware' of another's presence can mean several things: it is sensing another person's moving near you as 'currents of air' pass between your and another person's body; it also means allowing the other person's 'energy' – the direction, quality, and speed of the other person's motion – to reach you and affect your movements. It can also mean shifting one's place and shape in space in order to adapt to, or 'balance,' the physical presence (the energy, weight, shape) of the other body in space. As another body aligns to mine, the distance between me and the other person strongly influences my experience of his or her presence. Like inanimate objects, physical bodies attract and repel each other (Hall 1982, p.129). My own and the other person's body linger in co-presence for a few seconds, until one of the two breaks free and walks away, to meet another body.

4.2.2 Getting closer, taking distance

The study of the cultural and social use of space is called *proxemics*. It deals with the way people negotiate proximity, both publicly and privately, to communicate social meanings and values (Hunter and Whitten 1976, p. 324). This field of study is based on the assumption that humans exhibit, like any other animal, territorial behaviour (Hall 1982, p. 128) and that they associate different activities, relationships and emotions with different zones of physical proximity and involvement (ibidem, p. 129). We use our senses to monitor and regulate distances between and among each other, as well as to discriminate between a situation and another, in ways that are culturally prescribed (ibidem).

In butoh practice, we often experiment with the way different degrees of proximity among bodies in space affect the perceived 'meaning' of a dance. In the course of an exercise or an improvisation, for instance, we come into contact with one another, in ways that are not usual or appropriate in ordinary social circumstances. The following exercise is an example of how individual bodily boundaries can be challenged in the course of a butoh class.

We start with a 'Noh-style' walk.²³ This is a walk where feet are kept parallel to one another; one footstep corresponds to the single foot sliding halfway the length of the other foot. The soles of the feet do not lift from the floor. Ana says:

Imagine you are in a show in which you are wearing a big costume. You do not want the costume to move up and down as you walk but you want to move as smoothly as possible, as though you were gliding. To do this

²³ This exercise was originally introduced by Jeannie in another butoh class.

you need to lower the centre of gravity by bending your knees, keep your centre [two fingers below the navel] strong, and the upper body relaxed. Your arms are 'alive' even though they are just resting on your hips.

Ana asks us to walk around a bit to get a feeling of this walk. We begin by gliding across the space at a normal walking pace. While we focus on getting the 'Noh walk' right, Ana reminds us to 'keep your awareness open to other bodies in space.'

Now glide very close to somebody else in the space, following that person for a minute, before changing direction. Repeat the same pattern with somebody else.

We go on like this for a while, alternating getting close to getting away from each other. Bodies move faster across the space, gliding past each other, without touching but feeling each other's presence, and negotiating distances. Ana prompts us to move closer and closer to each other, but always without touching:

Use your bodies to fill the spaces. Do not touch. Just fill the spaces.

Experiment with density:

Go in a clump, then take distance from one another.

As our bodies change configuration, alternating going into a clump to spreading around the space, the space itself seems to 'transform:' as when rearranging the furniture in a room, the changed disposition of physical bodies generate new shapes and qualities of the environment.

Now dense again. More, more, more, more!

Keep moving while filling the gaps between you.

Bodies now get closer and closer to the point that very little space is left between us. Now, limbs individually thread their own way into the clump: an arm slipping onto shoulders and in between heads, a foot stepping amidst a group of feet. Some bodies are shifting heights, making their way onto the ground, finding new space amidst a clump of legs and feet.

Start moving across the room as though you were a single organism.

A voice inside me protests: 'How are we supposed to be moving in one direction?' Amidst the tangle of bodies, somebody's elbow is leaning on my back, and my shoulder is pressing against somebody's chest. I feel the heat, the smell, and a bundle of movements that surrounds and envelops me. While not being quite sure of what direction, of who is supporting whom, or whether we are altogether going to collapse, I avoid complaining because I am aware that 'pushing one's boundaries' is part of the practice. In this case, it is a mixture of odors of different skins, sweat, sensations of radiant heat and of weight of other people's limbs, which conveys a sense of loss of my individual physical boundaries. While noticing my own uneasiness to such a degree of intimacy, I keep following, 'listening to' the different weights, pressures and movements, while also pushing, leaning, and supporting. My movements are constrained by the others' around me, but a collective effort to move in one direction somehow keeps us going. Once we have reached, one way or another, the centre of the room, Ana, who has enjoyed the view of the 'creature,' finally asks us to find our own ending.

Inter-personal distances or 'zones of involvement' are associated with different situations, activities, and emotions. The situation described above can be identified as 'intimate distance,' which is 'the distance of love-making and wrestling, comforting and protecting' (Hall 1982, p. 117). As already mentioned, proxemic patterns, and the emotional responses associated with

them, vary according to different cultures and people (ibidem, p. 116). In butoh, proxemic patterns may be used and explored for their ability to trigger emotional responses in the audience. I shall further explore this aspect in Chapter Eight – concerning the use of butoh in performance. Meanwhile, in the following passage, Adam offers a personal account of how such proxemic patterns can cause emotional responses also in the dancers.

Adam reports how he struggles with some exercises we do in the class, because he associates the movement, proximities, or vocal expression in those exercises with unpleasant emotional states.

Butoh is so powerful for this, because I think so much emotional stuff is held in the body and movements bring it up and you can't help it. I remember when it was the first time coming to butoh, and there were things to do with shouting and making noise, in some of the warm up exercises even....To actually shout to make a noise I found very difficult.

... I find enormously difficult dancing with somebody else. Dancing with myself, like kind of going into myself, I do that... but often we do, you know, there is aggression, and there is play-fighting, or there is pushing people around, or things like that. It [the aggression] might come out.

Generally I've not really dwelt into that very much because I find it difficult. But even just a little bit. I am aware of coming to an edge, and just pushing a little bit at that edge...what it would be like just to... rather than...'Cause I spend so much of my life like this, just keeping it contained – what would it be like just do something more, you know.

What it would be like to make a noise and be loud and everybody is gonna hear it....

Coming to the edge of it and just pushing against it, or ideally jumping over it... But even just coming up to it and being aware of it, that there it is, and make an effort not to be held back by it but trying it...It kind of...it opens something up. (Adam, personal conversation, audio recorded).

Although, in a butoh class we usually try things out *physically*, which means that exercises *are not* directly related to emotional or psychological states, movement, gestures, and vocalisation can indeed be associated to and/or trigger emotional reactions. This is consistent with Klein's explanation that:

...most [butoh] choreographers strenuously resist any interpretation or explanation of individual gestures or techniques as having some concrete, easily identifiable meaning or reference. Nakajima Natsu of Muteki-sha is typical when she states in her program notes, "The gestures do not tell a story but evoke associations – to explain a movement is to undermine its meaning." (Klein 1988, p. 21).

One of the points of the practice is, indeed, that different meanings can be attached to the displayed physical behavior. The way we enact physical behavior, in turn, is often quite random, in the sense that we seldom try and 'represent' a particular emotional or psychological condition – that is, unless it is specifically required by an exercise. In a typical butoh class we usually improvise with the movement *per se* and with what comes out of it (an aspect that I will further explore in Chapter Six).

In Adam's case, I suggest that, the interpretation of a dance interaction as containing 'aggression' stemmed from Adam's propensity to read that particular meaning into it, a propensity that might have been dictated by Adam's personal experiences and background. In an interview, for instance, Adam says that:

My mum was a very powerful feminist... and when I was born, in '78, ...she was right in the middle of this and she was in feminist groups and so on. I think she had a lot of ideas with me –I was the first born – I think she had a lot of ideas with me, about raising me to be a different kind of man that would be more feminine, and more in touch with my feelings and so on... So I wasn't allowed guns, I wasn't allowed to play aggressively at all, but then, when I went into the outside world, to school, and everybody was so aggressive and fighting, you know, I didn't have the credits to be a part of it, so... I was still wrestling with this stuff. (Adam, personal conversation, audio recorded).

The fact that Adam was not allowed to behave aggressively might have meant that he never 'learnt' what 'to feel aggressive' means (i.e. because he suppressed feelings of aggression) and how to deal with it. Born and raised in Scotland, this turned out to be problematic, especially in combination with a soft spot for dancing.

I am very aware of it [dancing] as being not a masculine thing to do and this is maybe, partly growing up in Scotland, and growing up in the environment that I did...but that is generally seen as a girly thing to do...Yes, dancing, or being in touch with your body in any way at all...Except for sports, sport was the only acceptable physical expression...and I hated sport, I hated it always from...as long as I can remember. Partly because my sister was really good at it, and partly because it was violent and it was rough-and tumble and it was just too much. So it wasn't really OKAY you know? And I got teased enough as it was, and for being girly, I think it [dancing] is quite a problematic thing for me personally. (Adam, personal communication, audio recorded).

Adam says that through butoh, he found somehow a way to allow these conflicts to emerge, directly through his body:

I think the [butoh's] emphasis on the body is important because I spend so much time up in my mind that is good to come down into it, and it brings a lot of me that doesn't get a lot of expression otherwise. ... There are bits that are separated off and are not accessible, parts of myself that I can't, I am not connected with in my daily life, or in any part of my life. The masculine/feminine thing is a central, recurrent theme that keeps coming up again and again and again. For instance there are aspects of masculinity which I can't use, I can't get hold of...for example, aggression, largely because I was raised to be so non-aggressive. I can't do, in the situation in which I need to get angry because it deserves it or I need to get something done, there's all sort of positive uses for anger which I don't have...and butoh is so powerful for this, because there is so much emotional stuff held in the body and movement brings it up and you can't help it (Adam, personal conversation, audio recorded)

We have explored, through Adam's story, how movement, in butoh, intertwines with emotion and personal significances. Other butoh dancers have made statements that, in a similar way, suggest a relation between movement and emotion. While this aspect is important – as the socio-cultural dimension of butoh may depend on it – I wish to turn away from it for a moment (that is, before going back to it in Chapter Six). This is because the aim of my thesis is to also investigate the 'perceptual constitution' of the butoh body. We need to take advantage of any opportunity to do so, by looking into the sensory contents of butoh training. Thus, in the next section, I will pursue the notion that, in butoh, sensory contents can be articulated in a variety of ways, leading to different emotional and aesthetic results.

4.3 A multi-layered perspective on the senses

The notion that sensory perception is not a universal biological given, but that it varies from culture to culture, is an important step in the history of anthropological thought. It postulates that people differ not only in the ways they make sense to the world, but also in the ways they perceive and use their senses to go about it (Classen 1997, p. 401; 406). The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of a new interest in the sensory epistemologies of indigenous people (e.g., Stoller 1989; Jackson 1989; Howes 1991; Classen 1997), and the consequent establishment of the anthropology of the senses as an autonomous field of anthropological investigation.

One of the foundational premises of the anthropology of the senses was the critique of Western ocular- and verbo-centrism that had dominated anthropological discourse. Anthropologists of the senses challenged the supremacy of vision, which they associated with the attitudes of rationality, objectivity and speculation that had accompanied the rise of modern scientific thought in the West (Classen 1997, p. 402). They insisted that non-Western epistemologies should be understood in their own sensory terms, not filtered through the perceptual model of the Western analyst. Hence, the reflection on one's own sensory biases was a *conditio sine qua non* to anthropological enquiry (Howes 1991, p. 3; Classen 1997 p. 403).

Still, aspects of the anthropology of the senses such as its scope, premises and conceptual assumptions, came under critical scrutiny. For instance, the notion that the metaphor of the 'sensuous' would emancipate ethnographic discourse from its dominant 'textual' assumptions (Howes 1991, p. 7; Classen 1997, p. 403) was put into doubt. Some saw, in the metaphorical shift, the risk of imposing yet another arbitrary framework, which distorted indigenous realities rather than letting them 'speak for themselves.' Ingold, for instance,

criticises the anthropology of the senses for drawing a divide between Western and non-Western epistemologies as privileging the sensory modalities of seeing and hearing respectively (2000, p. 251). He especially challenges the notion that the same sensory modalities are radically opposed – so that, for instance, vision is distancing, objectifying, and detaching, while hearing is sympathetic, participatory and holistic. He further contends that vision is a more complex sensory modality than its depiction as a faculty of pure, disinterested observation would suggest (ibidem, p. 253). For Ingold, in fact, the Western project of modernity has engendered a very ‘narrow and impoverished concept of vision’ (ibidem, p. 253), which has prevented the recognition of alternative perceptual nuances to vision itself, such as vision as ‘an experience of *light*’ (ibidem). Ironically, it is to this impoverished version of vision that anthropologists of the senses seem to have subscribed.

Koen Stroeken (2008) draws from the anthropology of the senses the notion that different cultures ‘specialise’ on one particular mode of sensory perception – the ocular, aural, tactile, kinesthetic, etc. – (ibidem, p. 466). Meanwhile, he also criticises anthropologists of the senses, including Ingold, for not taking into account that, within a particular culture, one particular mode of sensory perception may be articulated differently according to the social situation. Stroeken argues that, within the same cultural group, a single sensory ‘mode’ such as vision entails more than one ‘code.’ For instance, in the Sukuma rituals of North-western Tanzania, the one ‘mode’ of vision entails at least four ‘codes,’ receptivity, intrusion, expulsion and synchrony, each one pertaining to a different social context: ‘magic, bewitchment, sacrifice and spirit mediumship respectively’ (ibidem, p. 467). Sensory shifts from one code onto another occur in accordance with a particular social context. To account for such contextual shifts is very important in order to avoid the fallacy of ‘sensotyping’ a particular culture (ibidem, pp. 469-472).

More recently, Sarah Pink has urged 'a rethinking of how we conceptualise anthropology around the senses' (Howes and Pink 2010, p. 338). To her, 'the label of anthropology of the senses suggests a sub-discipline that entails using anthropological concepts and theories to study the senses' (ibidem, p. 338). By contrast, she proposes using theories of sensory perception to answer anthropological questions (ibidem, p. 337). The conceptual move would be one from 'the anthropological study of the senses' to 'the study of culturally constructed sensory categories' (p. 337), a shift in emphasis that would justify the re-labelling of the 'anthropology of the senses' to 'sensory anthropology.' Following Pink's formulation, sensory anthropology would situate the anthropology of the senses into the cultural articulations of perception through a participatory, practical interweaving of anthropological and indigenous knowledges (ibidem, pp. 337-338).

Pink's suggestion that sensory anthropology should draw on theories of perception from scientific domains such as neurology (p.332) is opposed by Howes, for whom 'neuroscience is itself a product of culture in its particular research aims, methods and interpretations, and therefore cannot provide an a-cultural, a-historical paradigm for understanding cultural phenomena' (Howes and Pink 2010, p. 335). In turn, Pink disputes the capacity of anthropology to provide an a-cultural, a-historical paradigm as, she notes, '[a]re not anthropologists unavoidably complicit in the (re)constitution of a discipline that somehow frames indigenous understandings when they participate in anthropological theory-building?' (Howes and Pink 2010, p. 337). Ingold reaffirms Pink's assertion in arguing that '... it is hard to imagine any paradigm that could be less cultural, and less historical, than one which assumes that everyone else's paradigm, whether indigenous person or scientist, is a product of cultural history' (Howes and Ingold 2011, p. 315).

Ingold criticises Howes for relying on a representational model of perception in which the senses are bodily registers 'taking in' information from the

environment, while the mind organises such information into culturally meaningful categories (Howes and Ingold 2011, p. 314). He argues that an anthropology of the 'senses' as reified categories is necessary to Howes because he does not have an adequate conception of the nature of perception, locating it in the senses as transmitters in the body, while keeping the mind as the translator of natural stimuli into cultural categories. In contrast, Ingold posits the senses as different modulations of the one activity of perception: '[i]n reality, ..., the environment that people inhabit is not sliced up along the lines of the sensory pathways by which they access it. It is the *same* world, whatever paths they take' (Howes and Ingold 2011, p. 316, original emphasis). That is, the notion of a clear cut distinction between the senses is undermined as the latter are understood not as 'filters in the conversion of external stimuli into internal mental representations' but as 'aspects of action – ways of attentively going forth in the world' (ibidem, p. 325). That movement is central to Ingold's theory of perception is shown in a passage from his *The perception of the environment*, which resonates with Merleau-Ponty's reflections on vision as corporeal immersion in the world (1964):

...the eyes and ears should not be understood as separate keyboards for the registration of sensation but as organs of the body as a whole, in whose movement, within an environment, the activity of perception consists. (...) Sight and hearing, to the extent that they can be distinguished at all, are but facets of this action, and the quality of the experience, whether cast in light or sound, is intrinsic to the bodily movement entailed, rather than possessed 'after the fact' by the mind (Ingold 2000, p. 268).

Howes criticises Ingold's work for not being anthropological enough. For Howes, Ingold's model of perception as activity does not sufficiently account for cultural variations (Howes and Ingold 2011, p. 320-321; p. 330) and it

'naturalises' perception as biological and universal (ibidem, p. 321). Criticising Ingold's 'naïve emphasis on some primal, "prereflective" ... unity' of the senses (Howes and Pink 2010, p. 335), Howes dismisses Ingold's approach to the senses as 'phenomenological' (ibidem, p. 335).

Stroeken, meanwhile, though acknowledging the value of Ingold's perspective, labels it 'cross-sensory' in that it has little to do with vision or hearing but concerns all the senses, and criticizes it for not taking into account contextual variations of perception within a single culture (Stroeken 2008, p. 473). According to Stroeken, Ingold's model opposes a 'non-representational' type of vision to a 'representational' one, each pertaining to non-Western and Western cultures respectively (ibidem, p. 467), where 'one perceptual reality is understood to permeate one particular culture' (ibidem, p. 473). To support his argument, Stroeken describes how, among the Sukuma, the same non-representational code of vision presents varying semantic layering depending on context (ibidem, pp. 474-480). For instance, a non-representational visual code can be found in contexts of commensality and greetings, where it articulates a condition of reciprocal receptivity, or 'being with' (p. 474). Such a code is also found in spirit mediumship, where it articulates utter receptivity and cross-sensory synchronization with the spirit (p. 480). Meanwhile, the 'intruding' code of vision – usually associated with Western culture – is also found among the Sukuma, pertaining to situations of crisis and affliction, such as bewitchment (p. 476).

I think that both Howes and Stroeken overlook the centrality of practice to Ingold's theory of perception. Howes sees Ingold's perspective as failing to account for 'cultural difference' in sensory perception, thus labelling his perspective phenomenological. Yet Ingold does not deny cultural difference. Instead, his point is that, while sharing the 'existential condition of our common immersion in a continuous world' (Howes and Ingold 2011, p. 324), we differ in the ways we carry out this same immersion across different

environments. To Ingold, perceptual differences and commonalities are not 'superimposed by "culture" upon a common bedrock of "nature"' but 'emergent' in the relational and processual unfoldings of social life in its different manifestations (ibidem, p. 323). It is to *practice* that we should direct our attention, for 'cultural' variations in skilled practice point us toward variations in sensory perception (ibidem, pp. 323-324).

Stroeken also underestimates the role of practice and skill in Ingold's approach. It is inaccurate and misleading to state, as he does, that, in Ingold's approach, 'one perceptual reality is understood to permeate one particular culture' (Stroeken, ibidem, p. 473). Ingold's point is that, by attending to the manifold practical dimensions to social life, we can identify the cultural patterning of sensory perception within the same social group. Stroeken's overlooking of practice is surprising since he also maintains that '[p]ractice can be distinguished in terms of the sensory code that qualifies (all or a number of) the senses in a distinctive way' (ibidem, p. 481). Also, he observes that 'vision, hearing and other modes *attune themselves to the occasion*, and the occasion, in turn, depends on that sensory codification' (ibidem, p. 481, my emphasis). What would those 'occasions' be, if not different ways of inhabiting the world through practical engagement in different aspects of social life? And, what would different professional occupations entail if not different sensory patternings within the same culture (Ingold 2000, p. 283)?

In the following section I pursue the notion that perception can be attuned to the focus or goal of a particular activity, as carried out within a particular social group. This perspective, coupled with Stroeken's theory of multisensory encoding, is convenient in the study of performance cultures such as a butoh, where, as I shall show, a single sensory mode may be articulated differently depending on the aesthetic 'goal' to be pursued, and in accordance with the cultural parameters of the same group. Meanwhile, in contrast to Stroeken's

analysis, where sensory codes specify particular social situations or functions, in butoh performance sensory codes are engaged for the sake of play and aesthetic exploration, reminding us of the distinction between the liminal and the liminoid.

4.3.1 Variations of seeing in butoh training: ‘Your eyes are open but you are not looking’

After a butoh class, Jonathan (pseud.), a 25-year old French-Italian participant in the weekly classes, explains to Ana (in a conversation between the two that I witnessed) that he finds it very difficult to keep his eyes open when he is dancing in front of an audience. He says that he tends to get distracted because ‘the audience is there.’ He says that when he is dancing on his own [i.e. without the audience being there], he does not experience such difficulties. Because he does not feel comfortable with seeing the audience while he dances, Jonathan asks Ana if it is okay to keep one’s eyes closed during an improvisation.

Ana reassures him that some people tend to keep the eyes closed because this makes it easier for them to ‘go in’ – as she says so, she brings her hands towards her chest, fingers pointing downwards and inwards, indicating ‘within’ the body. Ana also says that she also feels like keeping her eyes shut sometimes when doing an improvisation, because that makes it easier for her ‘to listen to’ what is happening in her body. ‘However,’ she says, ‘in performance it is best to keep your eyes open. Your eyes are open, even though you are not looking.’ She also reports that once, in a workshop with Masaki Iwana, the master scorned her because, in an improvisation, she started off by keeping her eyes closed. ‘Why are your eyes closed?’ – the master told her – ‘You have enough experience as a performer to keep them open!’ (Ana and Jonathan [pseud.], conversation, paraphrasing).

When Ana suggests that keeping one's eyes closed allows one 'to go in' and 'to listen to one's body' more easily, she hints at the fact that, in butoh dancing, a kinesthetic mode of attention is at work and that such a kinesthetic mode of attention may be directed proprioceptively, which means, towards one's own body. Meanwhile, the fact that in order to direct attention to one's body, one may need to keep one's eyes shut, seems to establish an inverse relationship between proprioception (as inward) and vision (as outward). On the other hand, Ana also says that 'in performance it is best to keep your eyes open.' We can explain this paradox by looking more closely into the expression 'your eyes are open but you are not looking' and try to understand what it means from a sensory point of view. That is, we are going to try and approach the perceptual content of a typical butoh formula.

An example of 'your eyes are open but you are not looking' can be found in one of the most classical butoh exercises, commonly referred to as 'butoh walk.' As students prepare to walk from one end of the room to the other, they are asked to lower their centre of gravity, by keeping their knees slightly bent, and to let their head float by imagining that 'the head is attached to a thread that is hanging from the sky.' The gaze is meant to conform to this apparently 'neutral' state of the butoh body. The image of the 'glass eye' is often used in this exercise, by both Jeannie and Ana. Other times, both teachers use the image of 'fixing the gaze onto a far away horizon' – envisioned as an imaginary line extending beyond the walls of the room. I argue that both these images are equivalent to 'your eyes are open but you are not looking:' they identify a particular use of the gaze where eyes are kept open, but not engaging in looking directly, inquiring, or scrutinizing the environment. On the contrary, both images suggest that the pupils should be kept immobile, thus signaling a shift into a non-ordinary modality of vision. I will now embark in a reflection on what this mode of vision may amount to.

Howes (1991) provides some insight into such an alternative modality of vision by identifying a similar approach among Mount Hagen dancers (as reported by Strathern and Strathern 1971). Strathern and Strathern note that, at a certain point of the ceremonial dance, ‘...the men concentrate on their posture, staring out unseeingly at the crowd of jostling spectators’ (Strathern and Strathern 1971, p. 50). While the Stratherns focus only on the exterior aspect of the dance, i.e. body decorations and how such decorations symbolically relate to the state of affairs in the community – among male dancers themselves and between the male dancers and the audience, composed of members of the community – Howes interprets the same phrase in the sense that: ‘the men are more *proprioceptively* than visually aware of what they are doing’ (Howes 1991, p. 182; Howes’ italics). I argue that this is also a valid explanation for the images supporting a butoh walk, where the dancers are looking *out* – as in, for instance, fixing their gaze onto a far away horizon – while simultaneously ‘looking in,’ thus directing their attention inwardly to what is happening in the body.

Alternative versions of the same exercise suggest yet other dimensions to seeing in butoh training, as in the case of the image of ‘letting all the light of the room into your eyes’ (Karavan, workshop communication). When imagining that all the light in the environment is coming into one’s eyes, a blurring of the visual focus occurs. Theatre director Anne Bogart describes this perceptual condition as soft focus.

Soft focus is the physical state in which we allow the eyes to soften and relax so that, rather than looking at one or two things in sharp focus, they can now take in many. By taking the pressure off the eyes to be the dominant and primary information gatherer, the whole body starts to listen and gather information in new and more sensitized ways. (Bogart and Landau 2005, p. 31, original emphasis).

The technique of soft focus triggers a condition of ‘peripheral vision,’ in which ‘[r]ather than reaching out for information, [we] let the information come to [us]’ (ibidem, p. 30). Bogart and Landau describe this as a ‘looking without desire,’ and a reversing of ‘our habitual, acculturated ways of looking and seeing’ (ibidem, p. 31). Meanwhile, their phrase ‘the whole body starts to listen’ evokes a blurring of sensory modalities into a synergic ‘activity of attention,’ a perceptual convergence toward a common goal (Ingold 2000, pp. 243-246; 262; 268): ‘So if I hear the flight of birds it is because – following their course across the sky, the movement of my own body – of my eyes, of my hand, indeed of my entire posture – resonates with theirs’ (Ingold 2000, p. 268). Similar to Ingold, Bogart and Landau also find that ‘[l]istening involves the entire body in relation to the ever-changing world around us’ (Bogart and Landau 2005, p. 33). Meanwhile, in ‘letting all the light into your eyes,’ one’s perceptual attention does not quite *converge* toward a particular item *in* space, as much as it *opens up* onto the light *as* space in which the dancers are immersed. Here, vision truly is ‘not just a matter of seeing things but is crucially an experience of light’ (Ingold 2000, p. 258). ‘[T]he question is to make space and light, which are *there*, speak to us’ (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 178, original emphasis). Or, as I am going to propose next: ‘the question is to make space and light, which are there, *touch* us.’

Butoh walkers are alert to movement in and of their bodies as well as around them. Through the example of Mount Hagen dancers, we have already seen that peripheral vision can be associated to proprioceptive awareness or internal kinesthesia. Downey’s research on capoeira also shows that peripheral vision is sensitive to the perception of movement in the environment. In the context of capoeira training, peripheral vision is preferred over focal vision because, by exercising a ‘sideways glance,’ players become sensitized to movement in the entire visual field. It is easy to see the advantage of adopting peripheral vision in order to be more alert to unexpected moves of an adversary (ibidem, p. 231), because while ‘focal

vision could only see one thing ... [,] peripheral vision could track many' (Downey 2007, p. 224). I argue that, in the craft of staged performance, peripheral awareness is important in order to connect with one's fellow performers, with an audience, and, generally, have control over the space.

Downey's argument for the centrality of peripheral vision among capoeiristas is supported by neurological evidence that vision is not a single sense, but a complex perceptual apparatus functioning along multiple channels, with the back channel being particularly sensitive to movement (ibidem, pp. 231-232). His theory of the 'plasticity of perception' leads him to consider that by consistently training a particular perceptual skill, one can change one's outlook: 'Learning a perceptual practice means living, perceiving and coming to know through it. That is, if one learns to look in a specific way, the world will appear differently than it might through another style of seeing' (ibidem, p. 228). If we follow this perspective, then, consistent practice of image-based articulations of peripheral vision and soft focus through butoh training may also lead to deeper perceptual and physical reconfigurations.

After years of practicing the image 'your eyes are at the back of your head' (Onishi, workshop communication) in butoh walking, I did begin experiencing a definite shift of attention from the front to the back of my head. I noticed that, when doing this exercise, my neck would straighten up, my shoulders would relax, and my whole back would generally feel more 'alive' or alert. Architect Pallasmaa observes that peripheral vision stimulates a sense of contact with the space: 'Peripheral vision integrates us with space, while focused vision pushes us out of the space, making us mere spectators' (2005, p. 13). The 'encoding' of this sense of 'contact' is also worthy of attention. In my experience of 'having eyes at the back of my head,' my perception of a tactile engagement with the space was both 'exploratory' and 'receptive' in a subtle way that pertains to the relationship between the eye and the environment.

To suggest that *vision is tactile* is an oxymoron belonging to the philosophical and historical tradition spanning ancient Greek philosophy to recent Russian linguistic expressions that ‘classifies all senses as variations of touch’ (Paterson 2007, p.4). For instance, an anonymous Russian émigré writing for a collection of anthropology essays in the 1950s, reports that:

The dictionary of the Russian language ... defines the sense of touch as follows: ‘In reality all five senses can be reduced to one – the sense of touch. The tongue and palate sense the food; the ear, sound waves; the nose, emanations; the eyes, rays of light.’ That is why in all textbooks the sense of touch is always mentioned first. It means to ascertain, to perceive, by body, hand or fingers. (Anon., in Paterson 2007, p.5)

The overlapping between vision and touch has been acknowledged by human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, among others, who writes: ‘Seeing and the tactile sensation are so closely wed that even when we are looking at a painting it is not clear that we are attending solely to its visual qualities’ (Tuan 2005, p.77). In the case of *butoh* exercises mentioned above, the ‘tactile’ properties of the eye are, so to say, transferred to other body parts, through what can be described as an essentially mimetic process. An exercise consisting in ‘sending the eyes to the soles of the feet’ is an example of this. Having learned this exercise at a workshop with Yael Karavan (which I explore further in Chapter Seven), I once proposed it at a *Café Reason* class. It was interesting to hear people’s experiences of this walk. For example, Bitzia said that the image of having eyes on the soles of the feet made her extremely cautious about how her feet would touch the ground at each step, and that she would pay great attention ‘not to squash’ her eyes under her body weight (Bitzia, personal communication). As for the aesthetic quality resulting from this type of physical engagement, the image of the eyes under the feet translated into a general ‘softening’ of the movement and a subtler and more ‘careful’ walking pace.

'Walking with eyes around the body' is a widespread practice in butoh settings, as inherited from the 'classical' butoh tradition of Hijikata and Ohno. At the Kazuo Ohno Butoh School in Yokohama, Yoshito Ohno often prompted us students to 'see the space with our whole body' (Yoshito Ohno, class communication), a practice that he learned from his father Kazuo. In the following passage, Yoshito describes the way his father used the eyes for exercises in his dance:

Instead of using his eyes to guide him through the scenic space, he [Kazuo Ohno] relies on his hands to help him feel his way around. On such occasions, it often seems as though the hand itself turns into some kind of light-sensitive membrane. This phenomenon isn't exclusively restricted to the hand. At other times, the elbow, along with various parts of the body, become sensitized in a similar manner. This characteristic feature of his dance, whereby the entire body becomes covered with eyes, so to speak, has evolved over many years. (Ohno and Ohno 2004, pp. 29-31)

Yoshito's account of his father's practice confirms my theory of this butoh exercise as aimed at encouraging a tactile-kinesthetic engagement with the environment, by tracing a mimetic correspondence between the eyes and the skin. Meanwhile, Liao explains this same exercise in terms of sensitization of different body parts: 'a metaphoric eye is a centre of conscious awareness which can be directed to any part of the body' (Liao 2006, p. 95). Following Liao, I point out that the metaphoric re-allocation of the gaze across different parts of the body ultimately determines a sensory shift of awareness from 'outside' to 'inside,' from 'front' to 'back,' from 'up' to 'down' and so on. Such shifts of attention indicate a change in the bodily economy of perception, namely, from the 'centre' located in the head to the 'peripheries' of the body (back, feet, etc).

In the following section, I will focus on other variations of the sense of touch in butoh training.

4.3.2 Variations of touch (1): a 'listening touch'

In his analysis of sensory perception in the animate environment – focusing mostly on mammals and primates, but also human beings – psychologist James J. Gibson (1966) proposes that sensory engagement varies in accordance to the specific social situation. He describes how different tactile stimulations, which he calls 'haptic,' carry different meanings, leading to quite different modes of social interaction. Among the different types of 'social touch' Gibson mentions 'contact comfort' taking place in infant-mother relationships, and between members of a sexual pair. 'Each partner is soft, warm, and suitably shaped to the other, and each touches when touched' (ibidem, 132). Social touch is not always pleasurable, it can also be painful: 'Nurturing and sexual and affectionate touchings are not the only kind; there are aggressive touchings of antagonists and competitors. These stimuli carry a different meaning and lead to quite different modes of social interaction, such as mutual attack, or flight and pursuit' (ibidem, p. 134). In the course of butoh practice, we come across variations in the sense of touch, as I describe in the following account.

At the beginning of warming-up, Jeannie says:

I want you to put your body together.

On your own, use your hands to put your body together.

Start from your feet and then go up.

As she speaks, she demonstrates the exercise by pushing her hands onto her

body parts, as though fixing her flesh onto the bones. As I copy what she is doing, I feel with my hands the physical shape of my body parts: talus, ankle, tibia, knee; muscles, bones, articulations. For the first time in that day, I notice the presence of my body in its parts. Up to that moment, such presence had gone unnoticed.

Now turn to your partner. One of you will be the hands and the other will be the body. 'Hands' places his or her hands in a specific spot of the partner's body.

I get to be 'body' first, so I ask my partner to put her hands on the area around my neck and shoulders. As soon as my partner leans her hands on that spot, I sense a vibration and I feel heat in my belly. The vibration – some kind of release of tension – involves my left leg, which starts trembling.

Hands-partners, when you are ready, leave your partner.

Body-partners, let your body respond to the memory of your partner's hands.

As my partner's hands leave my shoulders, I notice that the vibration they had initiated is still there. I try to focus on it, so that I can use it to initiate the movement for my improvisation. Ideally, I would let the vibration initiate wider movements, but in this specific circumstance the vibration is too subtle to involve the rest of the body. I deliberately 'amplify' the vibration by imagining it 'travelling' across my body, so that other parts of my body are involved. The improvisation lasts only a couple of minutes, after which we swap roles with our partner.

It is now my turn to be the 'hands-partner.' My partner asks me to put my hands onto her back, towards the middle of it, on the right-hand side. As I bring my hands there, I notice a 'knot' of tension in her back. I keep enquiring

with my touch, and suddenly I realize that I am pressing my fingers and hands deeper than my partner had done with me. For a moment, I wonder whether I am being too invasive. However, I also notice that my hands have built a relationship with my partner's back: it feels like they have decided to take care of it. I notice a sense of heat in between my hands and her back. Eventually, I decide to trust what my hands are doing without worrying too much.

When Jeannie tells us to move away I slowly take my hands back, away from my partner. She hesitates a moment before starting to improvise, as if she is waiting for something. She kneels down; her back seems to be pushing forward. She sneezes a couple of times. Her hand reaches for the handkerchief she had in her pocket; she blows her nose with that. She returns to her standing position. After that, small, quick movements spread across her back. As I watch her back 'speaking,' my back responds by 'wanting to move' as well. I let the feeling of motion spread throughout my back.

After the exercise, Jeannie asks us to exchange a few words with our partner and share our experiences of the exercise. My partner says that she felt heat coming from my hands. I say that I felt her touch being very subtle, yet powerful, and that it had made my belly shake. She remarks that, while she had her hands on my shoulders, she might have unintentionally brought her attention onto my spine. She explains to me that she is a teacher of 'Alexander Technique' (a movement therapy technique aimed at dismantling ingrained physical habits and conditioning, which otherwise lead to postural and/or health problems) and that this is the type of work that they – AT therapists – usually do. She also mentions that she has a 'listening touch:' 'I might have unintentionally done with you what I usually do in an AT session.'

I propose that, in the course of the exercise, my partner and I engaged in different types of touch. I described my touch as being caring but somewhat

invasive or 'active,' whereas my partner's touch as being very subtle or 'receptive.' Meanwhile, my partner's qualification of her touch as a 'listening touch' adds another dimension to my description. I wish to turn briefly to this phrase, 'listening touch,' as it may shed light on my partner's perceptual experience of the exercise.

'Listening touch' may be understood as an intermodal concept as long as *listening* and *touching* are understood as distinct sensory modalities. Yet, if one is to understand 'listening' as the perceptual activity performed by the ears, why not use the phrase 'hearing touch' instead? I asked some of my research participants to compare the notions 'hearing' and 'listening.' Their answers point toward an understanding of 'listening' as a deliberate and focused mode of perceptual attention, and of 'hearing' as less intentional and more accidental. For instance, dancer Paul argues that '[l]istening is hearing with attention' (Paul, personal communication), while dancer Ana that 'listening is active; it is concentration and focus' (Ana, personal communication). Meanwhile, musician Bruno maintains that, in music, listening has a special status:

The word 'listening' is often accompanied by the word 'should,' and tends to put a high hierarchical value on a particularly focused and exclusive activity, which is only one of many ways of operating in relationship with one's senses (Bruno, personal communication).

Bruno also suggests that, as opposed to hearing, listening is intermodal, that is, it cuts across different sensory modalities. As we struggle to hear each other's words while talking in a busy café, he says to me: 'When I listen to you talking, I engage senses other than hearing. For instance, I use my eyes to read your lips' (ibidem). Ana also accounts for listening as intermodal in saying that, as a butoh dancer, 'listening is listening (paying attention) to my body' (Ana, personal communication). These perspectives confirm that

listening is not an isolated sense, but an all-around perceptual ‘act of attention’ (Ingold 2000, p. 24), a ‘synergy of the senses in their convergent striving towards a common goal’ (ibidem, p. 262). Depending on the ‘target’ of attention, I suggest that one or more sensory modalities tend to prevail among the others. For instance, in Bruno’s case, vision stepped in to compensate for the difficulty of hearing my words in the hustle of the café. He literally “hear[d me]” with the eyes as well as the ears’ (Ingold 2000, p. 277). Meanwhile, in Ana’s case, ‘listening to her body’ implied a prevalent proprioceptive modality of kinesthetic attention.

I wish to now consider listening as a distinctly *aural* sensory modality and ask ‘what is hearing in *butoh*?’ One way to approach this question is by considering the relation between *butoh* dancers and music. Again, participants’ answers to the questions ‘What kind of music accompanies *butoh*?’ or ‘What is the relationship between *butoh* and music?’ provide some preliminary insight into this matter. As a general observation, I argue that such relationships depend on both planned and contingent dimensions in a performance piece. Meanwhile, Ana proposes that there are a number of ways in which dance and music (whether live and prerecorded) can relate to each other. I summarized her view as follows: *a)* the one [dance/music] leads the other; *b)* the one responds to the other (in concordance or contradiction); *c)* they live independently and in parallel; *d)* they respond to and inform each other, as in a dialogue. These different ways may coexist within the same piece or improvisation. Having suggested that the relation between dance and music *generally* can vary, there is, in the relationship between *butoh* and music, one variable that needs to be specified, that is, music itself. While both dancers Ana and Paul agree with the notion that *butoh dancers do not need music in order to dance*, musician Bruno pointed out that, in order to consider the relationship between *butoh* and music, first one has to define what ‘music’ is.

There are several possible strands here: the obvious and I think most cogent one is Cageian in outlook, [that] the sounds of the world are music, they are unavoidable, one cannot close one's ears, so it is hardly a matter of needing music, only that *there is* music. If one thinks of music as something which originates from the particular place and time, with intentionality attached to it, simultaneous to butoh practice, I would answer that practitioners don't need music as such (Bruno, personal communication).

So, while butoh dancers may respond to the music as constitutional to the environment, they can do without music as an intentional, agentic production of sounds or, as musician Malcolm would have it, a 'structuring of time through the means of musical composition' (Malcolm, personal communication). In fact, as Malcolm explains, while both dance and music are 'temporal' art forms, that is, dependent on time, butoh is unique among dance styles in that it does not explicitly rely on or follow any particular rhythm or tempo. Ana confirms this view:

Many other dance forms begin with music and might choose to follow quite closely the rhythmical structure. Butoh is less/not tied to patterns or musical phrases unlike other dance forms which will build a sequence of steps based on the musical phrase. (Ana, personal communication).

Similarly, Paul argues that

In most dance forms, body movements coincide with musical rhythms in some way. ... Butoh may be practiced with music, but moving in time to the music's beat would be a rather odd thing for a butoh dancer to do, and would probably only be done ironically. (Paul, personal communication).

While butoh dancers tend to resist so called ‘metrical rhythms’ (Langer 1975, p. 30), they often follow a ‘timing’ which is inscribed in the very qualitative unfolding of their movement, an aspect I shall elaborate in Chapter Eight (section 8.3.4). Meanwhile, there is another temporal dimension to musical structuring, besides metrical rhythm, that butoh tends to undermine. This is the aspect of teleological, or narrative, development. Malcolm explains that teleological development was central to Western musical production until the twentieth century, but later became less dominant.

At the turn of the twentieth century Western music and dance – along with the other arts, from literature to painting – abandoned teleological development. Under the influence of non-Western aesthetic forms and the visual arts, Western music started relying less on controlled time, becoming open-ended. (Malcolm, personal communication).

One of the ways in which temporal open-endedness is achieved in music is ‘by including different sound parameters, to the pure, clear timbre of classical music’ (ibidem). According to Malcolm, butoh dancers seldom follow the ‘syntactical structure’ of a musical piece, instead responding to the perceived ‘emotional quality’ as conveyed by the ‘lyrical delivery of a melody.’ One way in which such emotional quality is produced is through the adoption of different qualities of *timbre*.

Think, for example, of the sound of a *shakuachi* [Japanese flute, whose sound some members of *Café Reason* considered a suitable match for butoh movement]: this is usually based on a very simple melodic line, with the focus on timbre or the quality of the sound, produced by the musician’s control over the modulation of the breath flow. (Malcolm, personal communication).

While Malcolm locates the link between dance and music in the timbre as

producing a particular 'emotional quality,' I argue that it lies in the timbre as specifying the physical engagement of the player with the instrument, via the interaction between his or her breath flow and the physiological attributes of the instrument. That is, the body technique of modulating the sound through the breath flow suggests a merging of hearing and tactility-kinesthesia. Incidentally, Ana confirms this notion by saying that 'another way I use music [as a dancer] is in trying to use some of its qualities to describe or generate movement, setting exercises to embody or contrast a particular sound quality *almost as a texture*' (Ana, personal communication, my emphasis). That is, she explains the relationship between dance and music in terms of the interchangeability of one perceptual mode (sound) into another (movement).

Different authors have identified movement as central to the experience of music (Langer 1957, pp. 226-228; Clarke 2005, pp. 62-90). Writing from an ecological perspective on music perception, Clarke argues that auditory information may specify *actual* movements, as in the case of the *shakuachi* player's modulation of breath flow through his instrument, or *fictional*, as in the case of motions evoked by the dynamic qualities of a musical composition (ibidem, p. 89). Whether real or virtual, the perception of movement is crucial to the perception of change or *difference* in music. The relationship between *butoh* and music may lie in particular parameters of change, such as the ones mentioned above, of a textural dimension to sound. As for change through the parameter of time, we have seen that metrical rhythm, teleological development and clear timbre are seen as limiting to *butoh* movement. Hence, although the relationship between *butoh* and music is always specific to the aesthetic intention behind a particular piece, we can agree with Ana that 'music in *butoh* is often 'atmospheric' and non-beat based (though this does not have to be the case). Generally it needs to be open to allow the dancer to find their own dance of the moment' (Ana, personal communication).

4.3.3 Variations of touch (2): dancing with taste

An exercise given by Jeannie illustrates yet another modality of tactile engagement in butoh training. Three dancers stand in the middle of the stage with their eyes shut, while the others sit on the floor, watching. Just before giving the dancers the vocal cue for beginning the dance, Jeannie grabs some items from her bag and puts something in the mouth of each dancer. She then asks the dancers to let the taste initiate their improvisations.

In this exercise, dancers directed their sensory attention to the taste, as well as the physical consistency, flavour, texture, and temperature of the substance in their mouth – which turned out to be, respectively, chocolate, sea-salt, and lemon-juice. Dancers spent a few seconds probing the sensation with their tongues and palates, and via smell. Meanwhile, the audience could only see the movement of the dancers' facial muscles. This preliminary exploration, lasting for a few minutes, was the starting point for the dance improvisation that followed.

4.4 Ending the class

At the end of a butoh class, at 9 pm, the teacher leads a warming-down. Sometimes Malcolm also takes part in this. The warm-down usually ends with all of us all standing or sitting in a circle. Having thanked the teacher for the practice – by saying 'thank you,' clapping our hands, or slightly bowing – we enjoy a last minute of togetherness in the circle. We gradually return to conventional modes of interaction. Then, we change into ordinary clothes and pay for the practice. It is at this point that, for the first time in last two hours, we might ask each other: 'How are you doing?' 'How was your week?'

Jonathan (pseud.), a 25-year old French-Italian professional comes to Oxford from Bristol every Friday to join the butoh class. In order not to miss his train

back to Bristol, he often leaves the practice five minutes before the end. He explains to me why he does not mind leaving a bit earlier than the others:

In a way I enjoy the fact that I have to leave right after the class and not talk to people, because I see butoh as a much more pure language compared to the traditional language: some kind of 'enchantment' broke when I began to know all of you through normal human conversations.... When I talk to people I am quite aware of all the social conditioning (I will adapt my language to the person in front of me, choosing appropriate topics and avoiding others...); and something that I really enjoy in butoh is that I can't bullshit myself or the others. It's why I say it's pure. (Jonathan [pseud.] personal communication).

Here, the prevailing of a sensory mode of attention over a discursive mode of interaction is seen as establishing a different type of sociality, more direct and somewhat more 'honest.' This reminds us of Turner's account of the condition of *communitas* (1969) in which people relate to one another not as social actors, whose different statuses and positioning in the social structure condition the way they relate to one another, but as equals.

Not everybody goes away straight after having paid. Some people hang around for a while, at least until Malcolm has packed up his music equipment and everybody is ready to leave the training hall. At that point each one grabs one of Malcolm's cases – a violin, a keyboard, an amplifier – and makes his or her way to the exit. I personally enjoy carrying the heavy music equipment after the practice: it reminds me of the 'weight' of Malcolm's music for our butoh practice. Having gathered downstairs, we put Malcolm's gear into his car. We often linger in front of EOCC for a few minutes longer before saying goodbye. Sometimes we decide to continue chatting in a café or pub in the area. Even though we have switched into our 'ordinary' selves, echoes of the practice can be felt in the way we stand, move, and relate to the environment.

4.5 Recapitulation and conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide evidence for multiple configurations of the senses in butoh, and to support the idea of an intertwining of sensory and socio-cultural significances through butoh practice. To achieve this aim, I have adopted the conceptual framework of the anthropology of the senses. The main assumption was that the environment of a butoh class differs from other social contexts for it entails an expanded use of the body and of sensory awareness.

The notion of 'sensory encoding' (Stroeken 2008) identifies the way in which a single sensory modality, say touch, can be variously articulated depending on the social situation. I have argued that in butoh training, sensory encoding takes place primarily for the sake of exploring aesthetic and emotional contents. For instance, in exploring variations in proximity, I highlighted how participants in the class attached different properties, meanings, and significances to those variations.

Adam's story has shown the inter-connection between movement and emotion. Because of this interconnection, some practitioners may perceive butoh as a form of dance therapy. Whilst, in butoh, intense emotional experiences may occur during the practice, I argue that the investigation of emotions is incidental to the investigation of movement in butoh, rather than its primary purpose. I will further explore this aspect in Chapter Six.

I have also described different dimensions of sensory intermodality in butoh, as conveyed by butoh exercises and by the experiences of butoh dancers and musicians. In particular, I highlighted the intermodality between seeing, hearing and tasting with tactility-kinesthesia. This suggests that, in butoh training, an expanded sense of tactility-kinesthesia applies, and it encompasses other sensory modalities.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 The making of the butoh body: butoh techniques of ‘de-socialisation’

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine the coexistence of notions of ‘technique’ and ‘nature’ in the butoh paradigm of ‘deconstruction of the human body.’ I explain how the latter notion is put in practice in the context of training, and elaborate on its cultural significance. Drawing from the anthropological literature on aesthetics and ritual performance, I argue that the ‘techniques of desocialisation’ that butoh share with phenomena of ritual possession, trance and healing, promote unusual configurations of the sensorium, which, in turn, encourage the perception of one’s body as ‘other.’ Meanwhile, in the arts literature on butoh and among its practitioners, notions of butoh as ‘innate’ and as ‘learned’ coexist. While butoh dancing is associated with a return of the dancer’s body to its ‘original’ state, training exercises cover an important, whilst not always explicit, role. That is, despite the popular idea among butoh practitioners that ‘one does not need to know how to dance, in order to dance butoh,’ in this chapter I will argue that training does indeed provide practitioners with ‘tools’ to ‘unlock the dance’ that is believed to already lie ‘within their bodies.’

5.2 The tension between ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ in the notion of the ‘butoh body’

A fundamental ambiguity between the notion of butoh as ‘innate,’ or ‘natural,’ and of butoh as ‘learned’ spans the arts literature on butoh, where notions of butoh as ‘human’ and ‘universal’ coexist with notions of butoh as based on the

learning of techniques to retrieve the 'original body.' Viala and Masson-Sekine (1988), for instance, write that Hijikata and Ohno created butoh to reveal the 'existence of the body,' constricted by cultural or social inhibitions and habits, through the implementing of techniques of 'transformation,' including that of turning into a 'dead body' (ibidem, p. 17).

The relationship between the 'butoh body' and the body's ordinary, everyday condition remains ambiguous: Viala and Masson-Sekine say that Ohno and Hijikata wanted to oppose the 'reality of the body' to the 'superficiality of everyday life' and that they devised 'transformations' of the body 'as the only way to sublimate the body whose meaning seemed lost in the banality of ordinary existence' (ibidem). Yet, they also write that the two dancers emphasized lived experience as one of the main sources of their dance. Ohno, for instance, is reported saying that dance is a learning process that starts from everyday life:

Dance begins with daily gestures. When someone comes to me wishing to dance, I always tell him that it will take at least five years. During those five years, I teach him to analyze and organize his own body gestures, while deepening his consciousness of life. Throughout the learning process it is essential that neither of these directions be neglected and that the body itself be situated at the heart of the dilemma (Ohno, in Viala and Masson-Sekine 1988, p. 176).

As the ambiguity between technique and naturalness, between desocialisation and learning is not clearly spelled out, it remains a source of confusion in the art discourse on butoh. This ambiguity also manifests in the unclear balance between 'spontaneity' and 'control' in the dance. Fraleigh (2010), for instance, states that one of the basic differences between a butoh and a ballet dancer, is that the former does not attempt to control gravity: 'Clearly the butoh dancer cultivates neither the upward airiness of ballet nor

the ballet dancer's control over gravity' (ibidem, p. 68). She also argues that a butoh dancer, instead of actively controlling gravity, as a ballet dancer would, is taken over by the image that he or she is using as a starting point for the movement: 'In butoh there is no attempt to control the body that becomes the [dance] image' (ibidem). In other words, because butoh dancers strive to let their bodies be 'receptacles' for dance images, control over gravity would ultimately be irrelevant to them. Fraleigh, however, does not elaborate on what 'becoming the image' in butoh entails. She also fails to acknowledge that images are widely employed in dance training generally (Franklin 1996), not just in butoh.

This lack of clarity is even more surprising given that, in a previous book (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006), Fraleigh had reported that some butoh dancers are known to adopt specific techniques to relate to gravity. Among these is the *Noguchi Taiso* technique, which consists in releasing body tension in interaction with gravity (ibidem, p. 123). Butoh dancer Yumiko Yoshika, for instance, is reported saying that her butoh dance is based on a technique of sensitization of the body to gravity: 'As in *Noguchi Taiso*, my approach focuses on the body's dialogue with gravity and integration of the body with image and feeling (the senses). My goal is not the training of muscles as in Western dance, but the refinement of the senses' (Yoshika, quoted in ibidem, p. 120).

Itto Morita and Mika Takeuchi follow a similar approach towards gravity. They explain:

People can enter butoh naturally through what Noguchi called "the god of gravity." In Noguchi's way, it is not you who moves your body, but the weight of your body that moves you. All you do is to start your movement and keep feeling how the weight of each part of your body determines the movements. If you try to make your body move

intentionally, it ends up with over-control, excessive power and muscle tension (Morita and Takeuchi, quoted in *ibidem*, p. 126).

In light of these accounts by butoh 'professionals,' I would suggest that, in butoh, a degree of control over gravity is necessary, even though it articulates differently from other dance forms, such as ballet. In particular, the butoh dancer's strategy of control would be one that combines a prevailing 'passive' relationship with gravity with a minimum of 'active' interaction with it. The dynamic interaction of a passive body (what is also called the 'empty' or 'dead' body of butoh) in relation to gravity would produce an appearance of naturalness, or even, one of being commanded by external forces.

Going back to the notion of the butoh body as 'original,' the problem may be one of effectively translating performance techniques that come from different cultural attitudes towards the dancing body and its relationship to gravity, e.g. the Japanese, as opposed to the Western. Butoh dancer Nakajima explains that the passive body is not a prerogative of butoh but that it is also used in traditional Japanese performing arts, such as Noh theatre: '[Butoh dancers] found that [they] were making the same discoveries as Noh actors made, using some of the same terminology, but [they] had never learned those forms' (Nakajima, quoted in Stein 1986, p. 111). In other words, Nakajima says that the 'original body' of butoh is equivalent to the configuration of the body in Noh theatre: "'to return to the original body" is an invisible technique' that belongs to all Japanese performing arts; 'Noh performers take ten years to achieve such an objective. Western dance techniques, in contrast, emphasize the visual world of constructed appearance' (Nakajima, quoted in Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 109).

Nakajima's observation puts us in the position to understand the 'original body' as a cultural construct in its own right. Meanwhile, it is not that Western dance techniques emphasize 'visual worlds of constructed appearance,' while

the Japanese do not. Where they diverge is, rather, in the type of ‘constructed appearance’ and, consequently, the type of perceptual engagement, they engage.

In the next section, I approach the ‘original body’ as a ‘world of constructed appearance’ in its own right. In doing so, I shall intentionally distance my analysis from conceptualizations of the ‘original body’ as a universal, abstract model. Such approaches, in fact, tend to overlook the processual, lived dimensions that are inherent in the incorporation of techniques through which the original body is actualized. The following discussion will attempt to situate the original body in the fabric of relations and processes, actions and interactions, which form a living socio-cultural environment (Lave and Wenger 1991; Chaiklin and Lave 1996, pp. 6-7; pp. 17-27; Fuhrer 1993, pp. 207-208). Since, in this context, I am able to address only few of the manifold dimensions that characterize butoh training among Western practitioners, the focus will be on elements of butoh *teaching*, and on the dynamic incorporation of butoh *exercises*.

5.3 The tension between ‘desocialisation’ and ‘technique’ in Macarena Ortuzar’s butoh training

In this section I examine the coexistence of notions of ‘naturalness’ and ‘technique,’ and of ‘socialisation’ and ‘desocialisation,’ in the butoh teaching of Macarena Ortuzar. Macarena is a Chilean dancer with a background in ballet, modern dance and butoh. She has performed across Chile, the U.S. and Japan, before settling in the UK. She has a day job in Oxford, while also working as a dance teacher, and is involved in performance collaborations as a solo dancer. While not a member of *Café Reason*, Macarena is often invited to lead the Friday evening butoh class as a guest teacher.

In Japan, Macarena trained with Min Tanaka, who had in turn been influenced by Hijikata. Discipline, thoroughness, and endurance to physical discomfort and pain characterize Macarena's style of training, linking her approach – via Tanaka – to Hijikata's 'hard' style of *butoh*. Macarena's words always convey a deep respect towards the Japanese (especially Hijikata's) *butoh* tradition, and the influence it has had on her work. Yet, like Tanaka, and other contemporary *butoh*-influenced dancers and performance artists²⁴ who do not wish for their work to be constricted by the label of 'butoh' (Fraleigh 2010, p. 77), Macarena specifies: 'Let's not call it "butoh." What is "butoh" after all? Let's just call it "dance."' Incidentally, I suggest that Macarena's statement is consistent with discourses of *butoh* as based on direct personal experience, rather than on the imitation of a master, or reproduction of a particular style. That is, in referring to *butoh* generically as 'dance,' Macarena reaffirms *butoh*'s 'normative' indeterminacy. I suggest that it is by virtue of this indeterminacy that *butoh* practitioners are free to define *butoh* for themselves, through the filter of their own motivations, expectations, desires and needs. That is, the notion of *butoh* as 'just dance' makes room for personal elaborations of *butoh*, hence endowing the practitioners with a sense of 'owning' the practice (Lave 1990, p. 324).

In specifying the distinctiveness of his approach, Min Tanaka called his style of training 'body weather' (Marshall 2006, pp. 55-56). At the heart of this approach is the notion that '[t]he body is not a set entity [but that it] constantly changes, like the weather. [This is t]he body that measures the landscape, the body in intercourse with weather, the body kissing [the] mass of peat, the body in [a] love-death relation to the day' (Tanaka, quoted in Marshall 2006, p. 56). While generally considered an offshoot of *butoh*, *body weather* focuses on the relationship between the body and the environment. Hence, its training

²⁴ Among them: Eiko and Koma, Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, and Frances Barbe (Fraleigh 2010, p. 77).

is preferably carried out outdoors, away from urban settings. In recalling his training experience with former Tanaka's student de Quincey in the Australian Central Desert, performance scholar and body weather practitioner McAuley (2000) highlights the centrality of 'place' to body weather training. Since different settings inform the same type of training differently, it is worth considering for a moment what body weather training in Japan may look like.²⁵

At Min Tanaka's Body Weather farm, in Hakushu, Yamanashi prefecture, Japan, the students' daily practice is divided between dance training and working at the farm – raising rice, vegetables, and chickens. These two dimensions of practice, farming and dancing, intermingle and overlap in ways that are contiguous to the socio-physical setting in which they are being carried out. For instance, when working in paddy fields, practitioners go barefoot to move more easily through the mud, which is ankle or even knee deep. They bend over to push the rice seedlings into the mud using their thumb and middle fingers. In stepping sideways, in parallel to the area where they are planting the seedlings, they keep their knees bent, the pelvis pushed down and back (to protect the lower back from injury), raising a foot at the time from the muddy water, and sinking it into it again as they step. In this case, practitioners incorporate the dance training while conforming to the behavioral environment of paddy fields, through the enacting of traditional farming techniques and in direct interaction with the land (Fuhrer 1996, pp. 186-190; 197). As practitioners shape the land through their work – which is 'done close-up, in an immediate, muscular and visceral engagement' with the elements (Ingold 2011, p. 126) – the land shapes their bodies in turn. This

²⁵ In doing so I have relied on web-based documentation and resources, especially Min Tanaka's bodyweather official website (<http://bodyweather.blogspot.co.uk/2009/03/min-tanaka.html>, accessed July 2013), and video posts by body weather practitioners on youtube.

explains Tanaka's maxim, as it is known among butoh practitioners, that 'the dancer is a farmer, and the farmer is a dancer.' Also, it reminds us that Hijikata himself drew the origins of his butoh dance from mud (Hijikata 1987, p.125), and to the work of peasants in his native area, rural Tohoku (Atsushi, personal conversation).

The above-mentioned example shows that an important component of body weather is the relationship between the dancer and the socio-physical environment. Through active engagement with the land, as shaped by socio-cultural factors, farming blends into dance training, and vice-versa. Macarena's attempt to maintain the original inspiration of body weather can be found in her preference to run outdoor workshops, in different locations of the English countryside. For instance, in her bimonthly *Body in land* workshop series, participants are encouraged to explore the relationship between their bodies and the land during different seasons. Aspects of the environment through the changing seasons' impact affect the nature of the work, which may include dynamic, energetic, and rhythmic 'muscle-bone' work-outs on uneven ground, long walks along country trails in complete silence, investigations of the environment through touch, rolling across stony ground, and running across the land blindfolded. Although the intensive *Body in land* workshops stimulate the participants' perceptual intertwining with the contingent 'weather-world' (Ingold 2011, pp. 126-135) of the English countryside, it may be seen as lacking the dimension of daily, sustained, and repetitive engagement with, in and through the land, which is an important part of the body weather at Tanaka's farm. That is, it lacks of the mimetic dimension, here understood as that 'act of complementarity' (Cox 2003, p. 108) between dancer and the environment, which binds (Ingold 2011, pp. 121-123) the one to the other.

5.3.1 From actual to virtual sensory relations

In the context of Macarena's teaching at the Friday evening class, the dynamic entanglement between the practitioners' moving bodies and the environment is stripped back to the most basic kinesthetic relations: postural, coordination, flexibility and endurance exercises stimulate, not without effort, the perception of bare physical forces through dynamic techniques of connecting, opening, and grounding. The practice of not talking during the training, while underpinning the radical corporeality of the circumstance, also serves as a reminder of the historical 'roots' of the practice. Thus, Macarena may inform the participants that 'there will not be much talking during the training' because 'this is how it works in Japan, where I trained.'

The class begins with a light yet thorough warm up, which begins with tapping the body with one's hands (changing between back fists, knuckles and fingertips depending on the area being tapped), from head to toes and all the way back, producing friction, hence heat, which 'wakes up' the body and stimulates blood circulation. Jumping in place, contrasting shivering to staying still, and stretching exercises follow. For the half-hour of the warm-up, participants, gathered in a circle, imitate Macarena. After the warm up, the core of the training consists of muscle-bone sensitivity and co-ordination exercises aimed at developing strength, endurance, flexibility and grounding. A particularly challenging aspect of this part of the training is the coordinated repetition of disjointed motor combinations while covering the length of the room (by stepping forward, sideways, in a crouch, or by rolling on one's side). Participants dispose themselves into two or three lines, leaving some room between bodies to allow for more expansive movements. Macarena, in 'leading orientation' (Downey 2000, p.208), that is, facing away from the group, demonstrates the combination of movements a couple of times, before starting. This gives participants the opportunity to watch, imitate, and, when possible, to synchronize their movements with hers. As Macarena crosses

the room while repeating the movements over and over again, the group follows behind. Once reaching the opposite end, she jogs back to where we started. On her way back, she may stop for a moment to correct the students, revealing a concern for the exact execution of the exercises. This is unlike many other non-Japanese butoh teachers I have trained with, while it is like Japanese teachers, such as Onishi, Murobushi, and Kasai, who also correct the students during the practice.

One of Macarena's most frequent remarks is to keep one's 'core' – two fingers below the navel – strong. This simplifies the execution of the exercises while adjusting patterns of muscle tension and release. Although the explicit goal of muscle-bone training is to 'deautomatize' the moving body through the rhythmical execution of unusual motor combinations, it can be compared to other forms of intense physical training, such as capoeira, in that it also

shifts the sensory channels that a person draws upon to balance, develops top-down techniques for relaxing muscles and diffusing tension, and fashion behavioral patterns that bring previously unnoticed sensory information to awareness (Downey 2010, p. 34).

Besides developing new sensory connections, this kind of training enhances flexibility and strength. Therefore, while deautomatizing or desocialising the body, muscle-bone training definitively entails learning the body in new ways.

After the MB training, most of us students are sitting cross-legged on the floor at one side of the training room while Macarena, sitting in Japanese *seiza* style a few feet away from us, describes the last exercise in which we are about to engage:²⁶

²⁶ This part of the practice has been video-recorded, with Macarena's permission, which means that the words in the text are the ones she actually used. I have partly modified the structure of some sentences to give them a more English language 'feel.'

It is simply a walk, but a walk inspired by an exercise of a Japanese butoh dancer, and it is called 'becoming nothing.'

These days I am really thinking about the origins of the body; this phrase ['origins of the body'] is actually Hijikata's expression. Hijikata, for those of you who don't know him, is the man who started the [butoh] movement in the fifties. Personally, I feel very inspired by him. He had strength, and a way of seeing things that was different; mainly, he wanted to break with the form as much as he could, and find the original body.

Think about shedding your skin, what society tells you to be.... [Think about shedding] your domesticated body. Right now I am really fighting [with this idea] because you become part of society because you don't have any choice.

For me it is an attempt to get there [to the original body] again. How to get to your body that you forget?Everything you do, walk, and think, is almost like a machine. How can we break this?

And for those who just want to dance, try and find what is you, your landscape, your experience as a human being. So how can we think about what makes you a human being? [It is] things that have no words – feelings, emotions.

Even though we can't [avoid experiencing those feelings and emotions], think about shedding, getting rid, as much as possible, of what we know, and what we think we know and it is comfortable for us, and detach [ourselves from it] as much as we can. It is a fight against attachment.

How can we be more detached?

Macarena pauses as she takes some onions out of her bag.

I brought these onions that I had planted, and the onion is a very interesting example of layers [that are] covering something inside. Let's pass it around, so that all of you can take off one [layer].

Macarena peels off the first layer of the onion and then passes around so that each student can take off one layer.

Really understanding the texture, from when you start to when you finish. Just experience it.

Students focus on peeling off the layers. One of the students, handling the layers between her fingers, brings it to her nose to smell it. Macarena continues speaking in a composed way:

Now we are getting together and start moving as a group. So we are going to forget about ourselves, about our ego, and move as a group.

It is a slow walk. Technically, maybe just bend your knees, and bring your centre of gravity as low as you can. Your chest should be relaxed. We are going to think about the point between our eyes: the 'blue pearl of bliss,' or 'third eye,' in Yoga.

Just walk, and I would like you to think that for each step we take we leave something behind so that, by the time we arrive at the other end of the room, we have become nothing.

On the way back you are going to become something... bring one memory from childhood, allow it to travel in different parts of your body, if

it's something in your wrist, allow yourself to move your wrist... let your body talk through that.

Participants roughly arrange themselves in two lines, and for a few minutes stand still, focusing on their posture. Bruno, who is sitting on a chair leaning against the wall, holds his cello. He looks towards the dancers. As he senses that some movement is about to happen, he starts pinching the strings, then drawing the bow across them.

The dancers advance by taking each step carefully. Footage from the training reveals that 'carefully' means different things to different people. Some members of *Café Reason* focus on the way their feet touch the ground: first, by reaching out the floor with the ball of one's foot, then by gradually finding contact with the entire sole of the foot. This way of walking involves a technique of negotiating the body weight through a strong 'core,' to avoid shifting from one side to the other. In order to avoid wobbling, expert practitioners lower the centre of gravity by bending the knees, as Macarena had suggested ('butoh can be very low'), while keeping the upper body relaxed. Beginners, on the other hand, often forget to lower their centre, thus 'losing control' over their pelvis that shifts one side and the other, which is usually not considered 'proper' in a *butoh* walk.

This part of the walk is a standard *butoh* walk, in this case informed by the theme of 'becoming nothing.' Macarena has provided a number of corporeal 'signposts' for this walk: the bent knees, the lowered centre of gravity, a strong core, a relaxed upper body, and an eye on the forehead. The discrepancy between mere visualization and kinesthetic appropriation (Cox 2003, pp. 90-93) of these signposts defines the difference between old-timers and newcomers to *butoh*. To encourage kinesthetic alertness, *butoh* teachers often adopt sensorially vivid imagery, such as 'You are carrying a bowl full of water on the top of your head/ Razor blades are under your feet.' Because of

the intense kinesthetic focus it promotes, butoh walking is typically slow. Effectively, the slow-motion can be interpreted as a by-product of the heightened kinesthetic attention. Old-timers to butoh know this, and their focused engagement with the walk sets the pace for the newcomers, as they all attempt to walk 'as a group.' In this respect, learning butoh involves observation and imitation as well as 'sensing' and 'tuning in' the social environment of the practice, absorbing and being absorbed in the 'culture of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 95).

On their way back, when it is time to 'become something,' the most experienced dancers in the group break free from the 'walking' form, and engage in more personal, expressive movements: one dancer moves from standing to crawling, then gradually lies down, her cheek against the floor; having dragged herself for a few inches, she goes back standing first, then walking; another dancer continues walking slowly in a neutral stance, until her right hand starts shaking, the head tilts to the front and then to the side, her whole figure gradually shifting into asymmetry; another dancer spins around her axis for a while, another bends over and then folds down onto the floor to continue advancing on all fours. Meanwhile, the newcomers maintain their neutral form, though slightly drifting laterally as they walk, as though the movement of the more expert practitioners invisibly 'pushes' them to the side of the room.

In the meantime, Bruno plays on, the sound inflections of his cello, raising and falling, lingering and stroking. The sound mingles with the spiralling, folding and unfolding, quivering, stilling, closing and opening of the scattered around moving bodies. Asked about his relationship with the dance, Bruno describes his attention as being caught in 'the [dancers'] shaping of the space.' He mentions focusing on 'things such as the thickness of the air,' or the physical distance between the dancers and him, or between one dancer and another.

What is dancing to me as musician then? The shape of space which is created by their movement, the distance, the emptiness of space in that distance, the knowledge and attention to their flesh, blood, sinewy nature, the shifts in (my) focus from the small specific movement to the larger. (Bruno, personal communication).

In approaching the end of the walk, the more experienced practitioners keep exploring more or less dynamic attitudes, while the three newcomers continue walking neutrally. As practitioners reach the end of the room, they sit on the floor with their backs against the wall, and watch the three dancers who are left in the space: one in a contained, inwardly oriented stance, the other two expanding outwardly, twitching and stretching their arms, all of them lingering in the space, with the music, until Macarena asks them to 'bring it to an end.'

The 'becoming nothing/becoming something' walks entail, like the muscle bone training, a discourse of 'desocialisation' of the body, as evidenced in Macarena's directions of 'shedding one's skin.' Meanwhile, the instruction of recalling childhood memories entails an idealized image of regression, whose relevance to our discussion will be clarified in the next section, which concerns the deconstruction of the body in Hijikata's dance. Meanwhile, the adoption of techniques is not seen, by butoh practitioners, to be in contradiction to the discourse of desocialisation of the body. Rather, the standard seems to be one of 'butoh socialisation' *in the idea* of 'desocialisation.'

5.4 The deconstruction of the body (or ‘butoh socialisation’) in Hijikata’s dance

The search for primal ‘causes’ for movement via the investigation of the body is the foundation and main driving force of butoh. As Kurihara (1996), among others, explains, the best-known elaboration of this search can be found in Hijikata’s work:

Hijikata believed that the human body becomes domesticated – trained to function within specific patterns – beginning the moment we are born. For example, we grasp an object automatically, without thinking about which muscles to move and how to move them. We walk by placing one leg in front of the other, without thinking which one should come first, which muscles to move, when, how, and where. The unconscious ability for functional movement and muscle coordination is learned in infancy. Hijikata believed that for his dance to be successful, these deeply embedded patterns had to be destroyed (Kurihara 1996, p. 98).

Kurihara argues that, for Hijikata, the domestication of the body does not happen simply at the level of movement but also at the level of perception (ibidem, p. 99). To Hijikata, butoh was an attempt to return to the indiscriminate mode of experience of a child, whose interaction with the world and with his own body has not yet become ‘institutionalized.’

An example of Hijikata’s view can be found in his speech *Kazedaruma*, which he gave at the 1985 Tokyo Butoh Festival. There, Hijikata tells of how, as a child, he used to sneak over into neighbors’ farmhouses while everybody was out in the fields, and of peeking at three or four-year-old toddlers who had been tied up to posts and left in the house. Hijikata observed how those infants, who were left on their own, behaved. He recalls, for example, that they treated their body parts as though they were not theirs:

They made strange movements: one fed food to his own hand—What an odd thing to do! Of course he was not old enough to be conscious of his self. The child was treating his hand as if it weren't a part of himself. It was as if it wasn't his own hand. He probably felt that it was someone else's. From time to time, he would try to twist off his ears and all sorts of other things. Although this is really an absurd story, in it are the original movements that greatly influenced me later on in my dance (Hijikata 1987, p. 125)

This text offers an insight into the 'unstructured' perception of the body that Hijikata saw in children. Hijikata's anecdotes of his childhood also reveal patterns of 'connection' and mimetic relations between the dancer's body and the world around him, an aspect that also emerged in his teachings. Note, for instance, the use of onomatopoeias in the following excerpt:

Over there a man's raising silkworms. The noise of the silkworms chewing on mulberry leaves is endless – "*jyari-jyari-jyari*" – it goes on and on. If the man takes a nap while this goes on he'll gnash his teeth "*giri-giri-giri*." As the silkworms chew on, the sound of their chewing becomes synchronized with the sound of the gnashing of teeth. What you hear is the harmony of the two sounds. When the man awakens, his cotton robe has turned completely green. He gets up and steps into the room where the silkworms are chewing away, and he keeps on gnashing his teeth. All the elements are linked to each other. If matters always work [sic] as they do here, I wonder if dance training is really necessary (ibidem, p. 127).

Treating one's body 'as if not your own,' as well as the use of 'mimetic language' remains among the strategies that butoh teachers employ in training. In the next section I will show how such strategies translate the theory of the 'deconstruction of the human body' into practice. Meanwhile, I

would like to conclude this section by referring once again to Kurihara (1996), in whose thesis we find one rare critique of Hijikata's notion of desocialisation:

Since Hijikata did, after all, domesticate his dancers' bodies with his own movements, his claim [i.e., that butoh is a process of body 'desocialisation'] is perhaps slightly hypocritical, but it clearly illustrates the idea that a butoh dancer must have a deep physical awareness of his or her own body before even beginning to learn particular movements. To subvert the "natural" in the body, Hijikata even had his dancers question something as simple as standing (Kurihara 1996, p. 100).

With these words, Kurihara exposes the fact that butoh itself entails a process of 'domestication' or socialisation of the body. In particular, the point she makes that a butoh dancer must cultivate 'a deep awareness of his or her own body' supports my thesis that butoh involves an enhancing of the dancers' proprioceptive and kinesthetic sensitivity. In the next section I will pursue this notion via an examination of the contents and processes of *Café Reason* butoh training.

5.5 Techniques of ‘otherness:’ the making of the butoh-body

5.5.1 Patterns of ‘connection’

Language in butoh training²⁷ often points at ‘connecting’ the dancers’ bodies with the environment of the dance. For instance, as we begin the class by walking randomly in the space, Ana may ask us to ‘open our peripheral vision’ and ‘feel the currents of air’ created by the others’ bodies as they cross the space. Patterns of ‘connection’ are produced also through imitation. Much of the warm-up and first half of the training rely on copying Ana’s movements. Meanwhile, her voice and the words she uses may support and further the explanation of the exercises. For instance, in the warm-up, Ana may summon everybody in a ‘beautiful circle’ – a configuration that establishes a sense of ‘togetherness’ – and then leads the group movement with her body, which is visible to all. She usually moves slowly so that all participants can follow. The rhythm of her breathing establishes the pace of the group movement. Also, Ana often draws elements of ‘contact’ between language and movement by uttering, alongside words, unarticulated sounds. For instance, as she pushes her arms out and behind, expanding her chest in a long stretch, she also breathes out while simultaneously uttering the words *stretch out*, so that the sound of those words is altered. This makes the sound of that word very ‘physical,’ as a continuation of the body’s movement, rather than something separated from it.

²⁷ Classes are led in English, mother tongue of the majority – though not the totality – of the participants. Among the non-British participants are Flavia, from Brazil, Gloria [pseud.] from Spain, Jonathan [pseud.] from Italy-France, Tiff from Hong Kong, and Mirei, from Japan. I, the author and butoh training participant, am from Italy. All international participants are UK-based.

The dancers' coordination of individual movements through sight and a sense of rhythm or tempo – as, for example, set by the teacher's voice or the sound of her breathing – stimulates a sense of group interconnection that can be seen as a manifestation of *communitas* (Turner 1969). Rappaport (1999) argues that *communitas* is not just a state of society, but also a state of mind in which, in sharp contrast with the type of consciousness dominating mundane time, individual boundaries blur and participants share an all-encompassing sense of oneness with one another, or a sense of surrendering to a larger Self, whether the latter is the congregation, the cosmos, or the group fellow dancers (ibidem, p. 219). Such sense of 'reunion' is, according to Rappaport, aroused by the patterns of synchronicity, or unison, taking place in ritual action:

To sing with others, to move as they move in the performance of a ritual, is not merely to symbolize union. It is *in and of itself* to reunite in the reproduction of a larger order. Unison does not merely symbolize that order but *indicates* it and its acceptance. The participants do not simply *communicate* to each other *about* that order but *commune with* each other *within it*. In sum, the state of *communitas* experienced in ritual is at once social and experiential. Indeed, the distinction between the social and experiential is surrendered, or even erased, in a general feeling of oneness with oneself, with the congregation, or with the cosmos (ibidem, p. 220, emphasis in the original).

A similar strategy for 'connecting' takes place in the context of Japanese martial arts (*budō*) training, where a sense of bonding, or 'correspondence,' among the participants is generated via their repeating the movements over and over again in unison (Cox 2003, pp.115-116). Exercises encouraging a sense of 'reunion' or 'connection' can take different forms, however, which do not necessarily imply the adoption of unison or synchronicity, as I will show in the next section.

5.5.2 Gibberish meditation

Jeannie says that one of the aims of her warm up is 'to get people to work together,' a concern that, she says, stems from her training as a dance therapist. 'I normally start my warm up with people individually doing their own practice, usually rolling around the floor so they have lots of physical sensation, which is a really good way of grounding the body...and then, slowly, getting them to work with other people.' She finds that the best way to start 'bringing people together' is to get them coming in contact through their backs first:

Quite often I get people working back to back first of all, so that there is no confrontation, 'cause people feel much more comfortable about making contact with backs than any other part of the body. ... Then, slowly, I get people to making contact with other parts of the body (Jeannie, personal conversation).

Once people start getting more comfortable with each other and in their own bodies, it is the turn of gibberish meditation. The latter consists in two practitioners sitting on the floor, usually on their knees, facing one another and with each other's knees touching; then, all of a sudden, the two begin to speak to each other in a non-sense language, or gibberish, resulting in a loud stream of sounds overlapping, and a range of more or less distorted facial expressions. The clap of the teacher brings the exercise to a sudden end.

Jeannie never explained in the class what gibberish meditation is meant to achieve or what it is about. New participants are introduced to this exercise through demonstration rather than verbal explanation. When I was first introduced to this exercise I was at a bit of a loss, and also felt slightly

embarrassed because I was not sure what I was meant to do exactly. My feelings matched those of musician Chris (pseud.) who once, during a rehearsal with *Café Reason*, was invited to join in the dancers' warm up:

I found myself facing [another participant] really closely. She made all these strange faces and noises while she kept staring at me. I looked around me to see what the other people were doing, because I wasn't really sure of what I was supposed to do. I ended up copying what my partner was doing but felt really uncomfortable. I just wanted it to end. (Chris [pseud.], paraphrasing a personal conversation).

Newcomers may find gibberish meditation baffling and embarrassing at first. To Fuhrer all learning entails an emotional dimension, including embarrassment, shyness, shame, and audience anxiety (Fuhrer, in Chaiklin and Lave 1996, p. 186). Newcomers to established behavior settings are particularly exposed to this range of 'emotions within social situations.' This is because the emotional response comes from the perception of the newcomer's behavior as discrepant from what it is expected or known (ibidem). Gibberish meditation is embarrassing in that it imposes meaningless, face-to-face, and loud interaction with a stranger, while also distorting participants' facial appearances in grotesque ways – it undermines standards of 'polite' behavior. With practice, I overcame my embarrassment. Also, I learnt to ignore my concerns with 'right' or 'wrong.' I then started noticing that with some people I could really establish some kind of 'dialogue,' based on attentiveness and responsiveness to the other person's mutterings, mumblings and exclamations, as well as to changes in facial expressions, to the point of getting completely absorbed in the process. That gibberish meditation fosters a sense of 'union' and 'connection' among those who are involved in it, is confirmed by Jeannie's explanation:

... I love the gibberish meditation because that gets people to really

eyeball each other but in a really fun, opening up way. I really noticed that there is a definite change in the room: after people do gibberish meditation, they are together, whereas when people arrive they are all individuals (Jeannie, personal conversation).

I see gibberish meditation as establishing a 'phatic' level of communication through a non-sense dialogue, which does not involve words but an improvised negotiation of random vocalizations, voice pitch, intonation and facial expressions.

The role and use of phatic expression in the arts has been described, among others, by Schechner (1988), who explains how, in the arts, phatic utterances are exploited for their musicality, rhythms, and for the patterns of interconnection that emerge through their concerted manifestation.

Ordinary speech everywhere is immersed in a sea of exclamatory sounds, stutterings, repetitions, ohs, ahs, and uhs; as well as variations in rhythm, pitch, and volume – a whole language of metaverbal communication giving to each utterance its unique and unrepeatable shape and significance. In any situation of strong feeling this infrastructure erupts into dominance: the cognitive value of words is submerged in a rising tide of phatic expression. ... In opera, Indian raga, and jazz "meaningless" vocables temporarily replace words at moments of intense expressivity. The extension of sounds built on modulation of pitch, volume, and duration characterizing the aria, the raga, and the jazz riff is a formal way of giving over to the phatic quality of "pure music" (Schechner, *ibidem*, p. 221)

For Schechner (1988) phatic expression tends to arouse the areas that are commonly attributed to right-hemisphere of the brain, 'so strongly that the original cognitive function is overwhelmed – the singer, and the audience too,

is “swept away,” “moved,” “overcome,” “touched” ...”(ibidem, p. 221). Following this line of thought, I now turn to the notion that gibberish meditation allows for a transgression of ‘meaning,’ understood as the product of ‘linear’ or ‘rational’ processing (Rappaport 1999, p. 227). I will also stress the importance of this aspect to understanding the ‘butoh mind.’

5.5.3 A language of the ineffable

In the previous section I presented gibberish meditation as an example of *Café Reason* practice, leading the participants to experience a condition of ‘connectednesses’ to one another. Specifically, I described gibberish meditation as a form of ‘phatic communication’ (Schechner 1988), allowing participants to communicate ‘aesthetically’ by way of unarticulated sounds, gestures, and facial expressions. I also suggested that gibberish meditation makes participants feel connected by disrupting their ordinary patterns of rational thought.

In this section I would like to go more deeply into this latter aspect by drawing a link between gibberish meditation and glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, a ritual practice that it is found in Pentecostal and charismatic Christian movements (Csordas 1990). Glossolalia consists of streams of meaningless syllables uttered by religious speakers, which are interpreted as an inspired form of praise to God, or even a message or prophecy from God (Csordas 1990, p. 24). While some charismatic speakers believe their glossolalia to be a ‘natural’ language (*xenoglossia*), it might be that they simply develop ‘phonological-syntactic patterns’ through the use of nonsense syllables (ibidem, p. 23).

For Csordas (1990), the lack of a definite semantic component in glossolalia is the root of its cultural and religious significance as a manifestation of the

divine: 'Glossolalia challenges 'taken-for-granted' canons of vernacular expressivity and intelligibility, and in so doing [it seems] to call into question conventions of truth, logic, and authority' (ibidem, p. 24). Also, by bringing the body to the fore, glossolalia would lead to a sense of merging of the 'human' with the 'divine.' Glossolalia, in fact, 'reveals language as incarnate, and this existential fact is homologous with the religious significance of the Word made Flesh, the unity of human and divine' (ibidem, p. 25).

I argue that gibberish meditation and glossolalia share not only the element of semantic indeterminacy but also an emphasis on the 'performative,' physical dimension of communication, as belonging to the domain of the phatic. To this extent they can both be seen as an expression of liminality, for they rupture 'the world of human meaning, like a wedge forcing an opening in discourse and creating the possibility of creative cultural change, dissolving structures in order to facilitate the emergence of new ones' (ibidem, p. 24). These are the only aspects that gibberish meditation and glossolalia have in common, however, for the former lacks the character of 'divine inspiration' that pertains to the latter, defining it as a religious, rather than merely aesthetic, phenomenon.

By a similar semiotic account, and the common use of radically corporeal strategies of communication, glossolalia can be seen as representing for spoken language what butoh represents for dance. I argue that butoh's 'formlessness' – for instance via the ludic rearrangement of movement styles, forms and imageries – is equivalent to 'semantic indeterminacy,' and as such an expression of the liminal. Further cultural significance of these two practices can be found in the fact that, whereas glossolalia is interpreted as a language revealing the presence of God, butoh is often assimilated to the mysterious, the inexpressible, the unintelligible, the unconscious, or more generally to something 'other;' the particular configuration of 'otherness' in butoh would vary in accordance to the dancer or choreographer in question.

Ray Baskerville, a healer, butoh teacher and founder of *Butoh Kinoko*, the first butoh organization in the UK (now disbanded), speaks of the 'invisible' as one of the mysterious and ineffable traits of butoh. In the following text, describing the content and inspiration of his dance, Ray uses words such as 'metaphysical' and 'spirit:'

My concerns as a dancer are less to do with the technical or even aesthetic, but more to do with the metaphysical.... When I dance I am active not only on the physical level but on subtler invisible levels, my body becomes a vehicle for the manifestation of 'spirit' in the physical.... Body serves as I have said as a bridge between the visible and invisible realities (Baskerville, 1996, unpublished paper, courtesy of the author).

Ray Baskerville stopped dancing butoh in 1996. He moved to Hawaii where he currently lives with his family, and where he works as a healer.

In *Café Reason's Orpheus* (2008) butoh was seen as the perfect means to convey the 'unspeakable' dimensions in the story. Jeannie, who worked on the dance sections of the performance, which also involved singing, text and improvised rock music, explains that butoh was used as a means to convey the 'numinous' dimension of the Greek myth: "numinous" means the mysterious, the archetypal, the unconscious. The dance was a vehicle for that' (Jeannie, personal conversation). In addition, butoh was used to convey dark and extreme emotions such as passionate love, jealousy and regret, which were acted out in the performance to represent the story of the derailed relationship between the main characters, Orpheus and Eurydice. In this case, it was the emotions themselves that constituted the element of 'otherness,' as though the emotions acted as 'entities' that took over the lives of the protagonists leading them to a ruinous, tragic ending (in which Eurydice dies, and Orpheus is devoured by 'Shadows,' impersonated by butoh

dancers, which emerge from her corpse while he is mourning for her death). Here, the choice of butoh as a modality to represent the tragic, the extraordinary, and the mythic, was determined by the perception that

[Butoh] doesn't really fit with normal life.... It feels like butoh is one level of reality that is compelling and primitive and... interesting and enlivening and is kind of what makes life worth living...but it runs at a different level to the normal survival level of life, family, work ... (Jeannie, personal conversation).

Other formulations of butoh as 'other' will emerge in the course of this chapter and the following ones. For the moment, I would like to bring this section to a close by suggesting that the aspect of ineffability that emerges from the various attributes of butoh – e.g. as metaphysical, numinous, or unconscious – can be seen as an alternative configuration of the 'sacred:' that is, a formless, unarticulated dimension that escapes religious institutionalization (Turner 1969, p. 107) and the mystical dimension of every religious experience (James 1982 [1961]). In the next section I will examine some of the techniques that, via a reconfiguration of sensory attention, might bring a dancer 'in touch with' such non-ordinary dimensions of experience.

5.6 Body 'isolations' in butoh

The aim of this section is to argue that butoh dance techniques involve the reconfiguring of the dancer's sensory perception, leading to an altered sense of awareness of his or her own body. I will consider one common butoh exercise: 'isolating' body parts, in which the dancer is asked to focus on moving a single body part at a time while the rest of the body remains neutral or just 'follows.' There are different versions of this exercise, and in this part I will explore some of the versions that I had the chance to observe and to practice in the context of *Café Reason*.

5.6.1 Isolations with 'points'

Ana's version of 'isolations' consists of the group being divided in pairs, with one person in each pair having the role of 'watcher' and the other of the 'dancer.' The watcher chooses a set of two points in her partner's body, a 'leading point' and a 'reference point.' The watcher indicates those points with her touch, while her partner remains neutral. Once the points are set, the dancer starts moving by imagining that one of the points is leading while the other remains still: he or she decides autonomously which of the two points is going 'to lead the journey', and which is going to remain as a 'reference point.' The dancer's attention, says Ana, should always be on *where* the leading point is in space, for instance, in relation to the floor and the reference point. One should also notice that, as the leading point keeps moving, the whole body is changing 'shape' or arrangement in space. Ana adds that 'the watcher has the power to say: "Pause".' This means that when the watcher sees the dancer is going into an 'interesting place,' she can ask the dancer to stop and 'notice' where she is at that moment. This, says Ana, is a 'mental exercise' to avoid getting 'engrossed with one thing you are doing and just keeping some sort of reference on an abstract or observational level' (Ana, class communication).

It is worth pointing out that Ana's distinction between reference and leading point is arbitrary, as one could use three points instead of two – say, two reference and one leading point – or, one could use one reference point and one leading *line*. Beside being arbitrary, the distinction between reference and leading point is an abstraction: the watcher does not actually see the points on the dancer's body before deciding to point at them, nor do such points magically appear on the dancer's body following the watcher's touch. Instead, the point constitutes 'a sort of ghost' (Gibson 1979, p. 35), a conventional virtual sign or object supporting the structuring of improvised

movement within the 'imaginative construction' of the moving body (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, pp. 115-117). Both the watcher and the dancer have the power 'to shape' the dance: the watcher by setting the two points on the dancer's body, and by 'pausing' the dancer's movement at different times; the dancer by improvising in relation and response to the given cues. Seen from this perspective, Ana's version of the exercise with points reveals a tension between the dance as it is perceived by the watcher and as it is perceived by the dancer. While the former engages mainly through vision, the latter engages mainly through tactility-kinesthesia. My contention is that, in the context of this exercise, these two modes of sensory engagement, the visual and the tactile-kinesthetic, inform each other. More specifically, I argue that each one of these sensory modalities is both *optically* and *haptically* encoded, as I am going to elaborate next.

While, from an etymological point of view, 'optical' (Greek adj. *οπτικός*, from the root *οπτ-* of the verb *ὁράω*: *to see*) means 'pertaining to the sense of sight,' and 'haptic' (Greek v. *ἅπτω*, *to touch*) means 'pertaining to the sense of touch,' optical and haptic apply to both vision and touch interchangeably. The distinction is drawn from the field of art history, where haptic and optical refer to alternative conceptualizations of space and depth through the adoption of planes of reference (Riegl 1985 [1901], pp. 21-29). Specifically, the optical plane is associated with long-distance, and the haptic with close-range engagement (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, pp. 492-493; Paterson 2007, pp. 85-86). The shift of plane influences the reception of the art or architectural work, including the perception of its 'material unity' (Riegl 1985 [1901], p. 22).

Architect Pallasmaa (2005) argues that the optical 'distancing' and the haptic 'drawing closer' entail a psychological dimension. Specifically, the haptic would engage a sense of intimacy, sensuous participation and identification, and the optical detachment, projection, and abstraction. Such a psychological dimension is at the core of the social and existential role of aesthetic

production, especially architecture, whose contemporary crisis lies, says Pallasmaa, in its over-emphasis on the optical at expenses of the haptic:

Instead of an existentially grounded plastic and spatial experience, architecture has adopted the psychological strategy of advertising and instant persuasion; buildings have turned into image products detached from existential depth and sincerity (Pallasmaa 2005, p. 30).

This optical turn is, to Pallasmaa, the sign that contemporary architecture has lost its humanist vocation in promoting sensuous and intellectual engagement with the world, and of its cooptation in the service of a project of commodification of human experience (Pallasmaa 2005, pp. 30-34).

Yet the haptic and the optical do not have to exclude each other (Paterson 2007, p. 86). For instance, in ancient Greek architecture, described by Pallasmaa as prevalently optical, nonetheless 'the eye invites and stimulates muscular and tactile sensations' (Pallasmaa 2005, p. 26). Also Riegl describes classical architecture as engaging a 'tactile-optical' kind of perception (Riegl 1985 [1901], pp. 25-26). Meanwhile, for Deleuze and Guattari, a haptic space 'may be as much visual or auditory or tactile' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 493). While it has been widely acknowledged that vision may entail tactile values (e.g., Marks 2000, pp. 162-163; Pallasmaa 2005, p. 26; 2009, pp.100-104; Tuan 2005, p. 77; Paterson 2007, pp. 85-86), Pallasmaa argues that tactility and kinesthesia also can entail optical values through their interaction with vision: 'The eye and the hand constantly collaborate; the eye carries the hand to great distances, and the hand informs the eye at the intimate scale' (2009, pp. 101-102).

I now return to my suggestion of the beginning of this section that participants in the exercise with points engaged vision and tactility-kinesthesia, both optically and haptically. I argue that, in the exercise with points, the watcher's

visual engagement is haptic in its being caught up in close-up perception of the moving body's plasticity, swept along its dynamic tensions, as well as weight, rhythmical, and postural dimensions. It is optical in its attention to the outline, or 'linear design' (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 115) of the moving body in relation to the surrounding space, 'as though fully formed, in appearance but not substance – that is, as an image – upon the surface of the mind' (Ingold, in Howes and Ingold 2011, p. 133). As for the dancer's tactile-kinesthetic engagement, this is haptic in the dancer's attending to self-movement, in manifold perceptual aspects including tension, extension, flow, contact, friction, and postural shifts. It is also optical, in what Sheets Johnstone would call the dancer's 'imaginative consciousness' (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 115) of his or her own moving body in space. While one is always inside one's own movement, never 'far' or 'away' from it (*ibidem*), and since '[t]here are ... no continuous set of receptors to follow the skeletal outline of the body, either at rest or as it moves ... [t]he outline may be followed only by an imaginative representation in the form of a line or constellation of lines' (*ibidem*, p. 116). I argue that, in Ana's exercise, points rather than lines supported the dancer's imaginative construction of his or her moving body from a third person perspective, that is, as Ana said, by 'keeping some sort of reference on an abstract or observational level.' This is not too different from engagement in Japanese *budō* (martial ways) such as *shorinji kempo*, a fighting system where practitioners 'occupy an ambiguous position, both inside and outside the movement, participant and observer' (Cox 2003, p. 120). Like a *shorinji kempo* practitioner who aims 'to integrate the technical image, the aesthetic quality, and the embodied experience' (*ibidem*, p. 104), a *butoh* dancer engages both optically and haptically with the dance.

A concern for the dance's form, understood as a combination of haptic and optical, visual and tactile-kinesthetic engagement characterizes Ana's approach to *butoh* and it is central to her work as a dancer and choreographer. This perspective contradicts views of *butoh* as based only on

the dancer's internal kinesthesia or proprioception. In Ana's explanation of the exercise, vision and tactility-kinesthesia are encoded both optically and haptically. This double interchanging of vision and tactility-kinesthesia supports Ana's view that 'butoh is a performing art, not therapy' (Ana, group conversation).

5.6.2 Exercises with points

In this section I further my illustration of the exercise with 'points' to reveal the processes by which 'form' in butoh is grounded in tactility-kinesthesia, both optical and haptic.

In another version of this exercise, the watcher, always taking the space into account, 'molds' the partner into a shape. The watcher touches one point on the partner's body and from here the partner starts moving. The dancer's response to her partner's touch is not immediate. As Ana suggests: 'Take your time and really *feel* that point; *then* start moving.' Also, from time to time the watcher asks the dancer to pause so as to give the dancer the chance to 'notice' her overall posture and shape, and their relation to the space.

After a while, Ana, who is usually not taking part in the exercise but just observing, prompts the watcher to just watch while the dancer keeps dancing, this time autonomously choosing the points and also deciding when to pause. Ana instructs the dancers as follows: 'The important thing is to remain clear about what [point] is leading; don't give up your leading point prematurely; that's the temptation: that if you don't feel that you'll stick with it, you'll switch switch switch.... So keep going with the lead point as far as you can.' Ana emphasizes the importance of keeping a clear, strong focus on the lead point and on its direction in space, even though this might result in finding oneself in uncomfortable or precarious positions, as in the case in which the point 'leads' the rest of the body off balance. Finding one's own body 'on the

edge' and still being able to hold an awkward position is a skill that butoh dancers are asked to develop: an awkward bodily arrangement is often valued in butoh aesthetics as evidence of a dancer's technical skill and mental focus.

In the following excerpts from my field notes, I illustrate how the exercise I have already described with imaginary points encourages a process of selective tactile-kinesthetic attention towards subtle sensations of the body, which, in turn, initiate the movement. I describe how, by 'skimming' through sensations, the notion of 'point' allows one to 'isolate' and 'select' those sensations, using them as the starting point for the dance.

To begin with, Flavia shapes me: she pushes my head down, tucking my chin in; she also presses her palms against my shoulders, and directs my knees inwards, so that they face each other. She crosses my arms so that my hands cling to the shoulders [*Plate 3*].

Then, with one finger, she touches, one by one, three or four points across the surfaces of my body. Having directed my attention toward a particular point with her touch, she lets go of that point very slowly, so that my attention shifts from that particular point towards the space around that point. It is as though my skin remembered that brief encounter and went about searching for the lingering sensation of her touch: from this 'search' subtle movements originate.

As I start choosing my own points, it is a place at the back of my left heel that – as Ana would put it – starts 'speaking'. As the sensation of this 'point' becomes more and more definite, my left leg starts rotating while the left hip also 'opens up' [...].

The movement started unfolding from my heel/leg/hip rotating. As often happens in trying to remember a dance, I lost track of the kinetic 'itinerary' that followed, though I remember it being marked by a felt interplay, in my leg,

between muscular tension and gravity, and also by the 'shape' that my partner had impressed on my body. The memory of my partner's touch was a source of stimulation that helped initiating the movement.

It is then my turn to shape Flavia's body: I put my left hand over her right shoulder. Her right hand is leaning against the wall so that her figure is slightly unbalanced, yet supported. I move her head sideways, towards the right shoulder, and her torso slightly forward, while also bending her knees slightly [*Plate 4*].

With the touch of my finger, I direct her attention toward a point on her left elbow. Flavia starts moving from that very point. From time to time I say 'pause' and touch another point that leads her in another direction, a different posture and arrangement. Finally, I leave her alone (finding her own points). As I watch her dance, I observe that she moves (or is being moved by) her elbows.

After the exercise, Flavia tells me that she ended up moving the parts of her body she likes the least; as she says this, she rolls up her sleeves to expose her elbows; I ask her why she does not like them and she answers, 'they [the elbows] are too strong' [meaning that they are too pointy]. Wanting to encourage her, I say that I think 'they have a lot of personality.'

What led Flavia to move her elbows? I argue that two main elements played a role in her dance: 1) the 'strength' or definiteness of her shape, with her left elbow pointing out; 2) the cue given by my touch on the same elbow. As for the role of 'shape,' my impression is that, when being shaped by another person, a dancer is in a state where certain movements surface more immediately than others: an unusual arrangement can determine a likewise unusual 'felt relationship' with the space, and a similarly unusual response to that configuration. In Flavia's case, several cues might have determined her

movement response: the hand leaning against the wall and supporting much of the body weight, the asymmetry of weight distribution, the articulation of head and the knees bent slightly, the elbow sticking out.

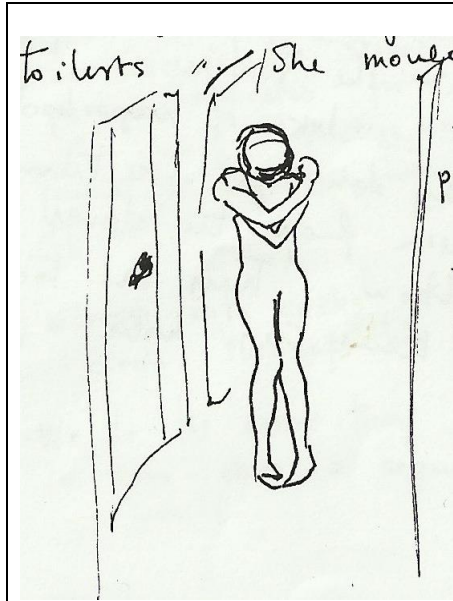


Plate 3

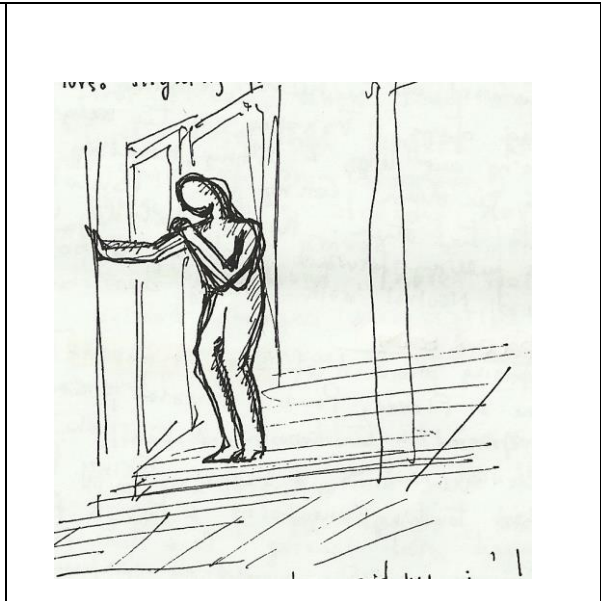


Plate 4

The partner's touch also has an important role in affecting the dancer's movement, for instance, through the intensity and directionality of the pressure that the watcher exercised on the dancer's skin. Also, by directing the dancer's attention toward a particular point through touch, and then gradually leaving that point, the watcher encouraged a dancer to maintain his or her tactile-kinesthetic focus on a delimited portion of his or her body. An example of this is my response to Flavia's touch: after losing direct contact with her, I noticed my 'skin searching for its lingering sensation' of her touch. The teacher's spoken instructions, such as 'stick with a particular point,' 'remain clear about what point is leading,' and 'wait and listen to what happens in the body' also stimulated the dancer's tactile-kinesthetic awareness and focus.

In this type of practice, a dancer may choose 'visceral' rather than 'superficial' points, for instance, 'inside' one's bone, joint, muscle, or inner organ. Alternatively, he or she may choose points 'external' to the body, such as in Paulette's 'contemporary dance' exercise, which I described in Chapter Three (section 3.3.5), where I was asked to imagine a 'point on the floor.'

Variations of the 'exercise with points' encourage dancers to imaginatively explore their tactile-kinesthetic awareness. Meanwhile, this type of practice enhances practitioners' ability to 'notice' and 'select' physical sensations they are normally not aware of.

5.6.3 'Piecing the body into parts:' modalities and implications

In this section I offer two further examples of butoh work involving the 'isolation' of body parts. My aim is to demonstrate the recurrence of this type of practice in butoh training while, in line with the general orientation of this chapter, attempting an explanation of its cultural significance.

Jeannie often uses a warm-up exercise involving isolations: she begins by asking the group to bring attention to their feet, and spend some time – five to ten minutes – 'exploring' them: 'maybe start by feeling your toes, or the soles of your feet, or your ankles.' Having explored the feet, she asks the participants to bring attention to their knees and, again, explore them; then, it is the turn of the pelvis, spine, and skull; finally, of elbows, hands and fingers.

Sometimes Jeannie also encourages the participants to think of a specific body part as having a particular 'personality' or 'way of dealing with the world'. For instance, she may encourage them to think about a particular body part as 'relating to' another by asking the following sort of questions: 'Is one [body

part] stronger than the other? Is one in love with the other? What does it mean for that body part to be in love with something or with someone? How does love [or hate, or anger, etc.] make it move?’

Ana also often proposes an exercise based on the same notion of isolation: it consists in all participants standing in a circle and thinking of having ‘invisible strings’ attached to their limbs. As participants enact the movement of ‘pulling a particular string’ with two fingers, the corresponding body part (knee, ankle, toe, etc) to which the invisible string is attached lifts or moves:

Pull your invisible thread so that your right knee lifts up. Once it is up, bring the knee to your right side. Then bring it down, paying attention to the space that separates the sole of your foot from the ground. Bring it down very slowly, as though you were never going to find the floor. As you finally reach the ground, just enjoy the sensation of support of the floor. Repeat with the left knee: pull the string to which it is attached so that it lifts from the floor. This time, instead of bringing the knee down gradually, suddenly cut the string so let your leg fall heavily.

Ana’s exercise is similar to the exercise with ‘points’ I described in the previous section, with the exception that, in this case, the dancer is self-sufficient in the task of pulling and of being pulled, holding the roles of ‘puppet’ and ‘puppeteer’ simultaneously.

Whereas in Ana’s exercise body parts are seen as ‘passive’ and as though moved by an external force, in Jeannie’s exercise the individual body parts are seen as ‘active’ or imbued with independent will. Though in different ways, both types of practice bring to the fore a notion of the body as made of independent body parts, a paradigm that occurs also in cultural traditions other than butoh.

Mead and Bateson (1942) accounted for the fantasy of the disjoined or dissociated body as a Balinese cultural trait. They noticed that the Balinese generally displayed outstanding control over their limbs, based on a heightened kinesthetic sensitivity that they acquired in infancy. Yet, they also noticed the correspondence between such a confident use of the body and a fear of disintegration and dismemberment. The latter manifested in the context of trance, when a person's body appeared to be taken over by autonomous forces inhabiting his or her limbs:

This body, which moves only in parts and without volition, hardly seems like a unit at all, and may well be composed of a series of separate units, each with a life of its own. ... Folk beliefs are filled with personified limbs, legs and arms, and heads, each animated by a mischievous will of its own.... [T]here are trances in which only the hand of the performer is put in trance; it trembles independently, while he himself and the rest of the body remain uninvolved (Bateson and Mead 1942, p. 18).

Bateson and Mead explained the dislocated, fragmented and puppet-like body of Balinese trance rituals as a dramatization of the rigorous 'movement socialisation' Balinese go through: Balinese children not only learnt movements by emulating adults; teachers would also physically 'shape' them into the correct postures and forms, especially when it came to socialising them to the traditional performing arts.

The animated puppet, the doll which dances on a string, the leather puppet manipulated by the puppeteer, and finally, the little girl trance dancers who themselves become exaggeratedly limp and soft as they dance to the command of the audience, all dramatize this picture of involuntary learning, in which it is not the will of the learner, but the pattern of the situation and the manipulation of the teacher that will prevail (Bateson and Mead, *ibidem*, p. 17).

Another version of the human body as made of independent parts is found in the Japanese Zen arts. During the Edo period (1602-1868), a pictorial and representational trend spread in the Zen figurative arts, which consisted in 'anatomizing' or 'piecing out' the body (Cox 2003). Cox argues that this new attitude of looking at the human body as made of isolated and observable units was a consequence of the Japanese coming into contact with the European traders, especially the Dutch, hence absorbing their 'scientific gaze.' 'It was an investigative and penetrative way of looking, that aimed at an understanding by getting inside things and recording what was there' (ibidem, p. 125). This 'new regime of visibility' that separated and displayed body parts has also been linked to the rise of the notion of the modern individual in early twentieth century Japan (ibidem, pp. 125-127).

Cox argues that this 'dissecting' way of looking at things was not necessarily in contrast to the Buddhist attitude toward the body: the scientific gaze which penetrated and partitioned the body was seen as magnifying, like a microscope, the reality of the body, meanwhile making it permeable to spiritual and religious investigation (ibidem). Nonetheless, Cox suggests that the influence of this way of looking at the body in modern and contemporary Zen arts goes against the search for mind-body wholeness, which is the goal of traditional arts and ascetic religious practices like Zen and esoteric Buddhism (ibidem, p.126).

To conclude this section, I would like to make some remarks on the technical and cultural value of the 'isolation' exercises I have described above.

Jeannie's exercise engaged the dancers' tactile-kinesthetic awareness through a relatively unstructured appreciation of the kinetic possibilities of individual body parts, as stimulated by a language of emotion: by attributing 'personalities' to individual body parts, practitioners were encouraged to 'explore' the ways in which their different body parts 'relate' to one another and to the world, their emotions and feelings.

Ana's instructions encouraged a more structured, definite and precise approach to movement and movement qualities. In her exercise, the dancers were asked to engage their tactile-kinesthetic sense in the following ways: 1) by focusing on particular points, which were thus used as starting or reference points for the movement; 2) by implying that a sense of 'shape' could emerge via the perceived spatial interrelationships between points (both inside and outside the body); and 3) by exercising their ability for engaging with kinesthetically constructed images, for instance through the action of 'pulling a thread' without the thread being actually there.

As a butoh dancer, I came to see the practice of isolations, in its various versions, as altering my own perception of the body. In particular, I came to see the metaphor of 'separating the body into parts' as equating the human body to the status of an inanimate object.

From an experiential point of view, I argue that the sharpening of the tactile-kinesthetic sense, and the related ability to 'isolate' and 'abstract' particular physical sensations out of the indefinite bundle that characterizes one's ordinary experience of the body, leads to a deeper appreciation of the body's complexity. Ultimately, although notions of 'disaggregation' cannot overcome the fundamental kinesthetic 'interconnectedness' of the body, isolations may lead a dancer to experience a shift from a notion of the body/self as unitary, ego-centred and monolithic, to one that is plural, ego-less and fluid.

5.7 Recapitulation and conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I presented one of the fundamental paradigms of the discourse on butoh, the idea of desocialisation of the body through butoh training, and highlighted the contradiction that is inherent in such notion. I then attempted to dismantle this contradiction, by looking into the making of

butoh's 'original body' through the dancers' incorporation of perceptually-tailored exercises in interaction with the sociophysical environment. A situated perspective on the 'original body,' that is, revealed its nodal role between dancers, sensory images and sociophysical environment. On this basis, I contended that the process of 'desocialisation' in butoh is, in effect, a process of 'socialisation,' as Kurihara (1996) had also noticed.

The analysis of selected butoh exercises by *Café Reason* teachers substantiated this notion by indicating recurring patterns of butoh enculturation: the establishing of 'interconnectedness' and 'unity' among dancers; the undermining of linear logic and semantic patterns of meaning; the engaging of alternative modalities of visual and tactile-kinesthetic engagement; the fostering of participants' ability to selectively and systematically attend to physical sensations in such a way that they experience a sense of corporeal dislocation. Overall, butoh exercises were seen as establishing alternative configurations of the dancers' sensorium – for instance, in the form of haptic and optical modulations of the dancers' visual and tactile-kinesthetic perception – and the temporary subversion of their sensorial hierarchy.

In the next chapter, I further scrutinize the idea that butoh training leads the dancers to perceive their bodies in unusual terms, this time focusing on the role of imagery in butoh training. I shall discuss the potential of butoh images in reconfiguring participants' sensory attentiveness, and reflect on how butoh language might generate alternative perceptions and notions of the body.

CHAPTER SIX

6 Butoh imagery and language as ‘sensory notation’

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, I proposed an anthropological theory of butoh dance which drew on notions of the cultural constitution of the sensorium (e.g. Ong 1991) and its changing configurations in accordance with different social settings (Howes 1991; Stroeken 2008). With this theoretical framework in mind, and the question, asked in Chapter Three, of how to address butoh’s ‘semantic indeterminacy’ (Csordas 1990), in Chapter Five I proposed that the butoh body is perceptually and formally constituted through techniques enhancing the dancers’ tactile-kinesthetic awareness and imagination. In this chapter I further examine the perceptual and imaginary constitution of the butoh body by addressing the role of imagery in training.

In analyzing butoh dancing from the perspective of training ‘processes,’ rather than of ‘outcomes,’ I do not rely on the notion of butoh as ‘dance,’ for this is too open a category to which multiple cultural and aesthetic preoccupations are attached (Averbuch 1995, pp. 26-27). Instead, my analysis is based on an understanding of butoh as set of ‘techniques,’ in the sense given by Mauss (1979) of ‘*actions of a mechanical, physical or physico-chemical order*’ that

are ‘pursued with that aim in view’ (ibidem, p. 104, emphasis in the original).²⁸

When approaching butoh from the point of view of ‘technique,’ it is virtually impossible to disjoin it from the dimension of language, and especially, of imagery. This chapter is thus about how, in butoh training, the uses of body and of language intersect. This might be controversial for – as we have seen in Chapter Five – ideas of butoh dancing are intertwined with notions of the ineffable as well as of transgressing linear and discursive logic.

My intention, however, is not to suggest that butoh depends on language for its very existence (although that might well be). Rather, it is to propose a method of analysis that addresses 1) the way butoh is learned and transmitted, and 2) the possible connections between two unquestionable dimensions of butoh, the corporeal and the imaginative.

²⁸ That is, with no other aim in view than the very ‘mechanical, physical and physico-chemical’ function that they attempt to pursue. To avoid confusion, read this sentence in the original context: ‘But what is the difference between the effective traditional action of religion, the symbolic or juridical effective traditional action, the actions of life in common, moral actions on the one hand and the traditional actions of technique on the other? It is that the latter are felt by the author as *actions of a mechanical, physical or physico-chemical order* and that they are pursued with that aim in view’ (Mauss 1979, p. 104). In this chapter I rely on the notion of technique for merely analytical purposes, for butoh is not considered a technique in the strict sense of the word but more of an ‘attitude’ or ‘way of being.’ Butoh dancer Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, for instance, says: ‘What I find attractive about butoh is that it is a kind of technique with no technique, and that through this kind of medium I can somehow connect to something which is both deeply personal and, at the same time, a shared interpersonal experience’ (Rotie, personal communication). Meanwhile, to temporarily address butoh as ‘technique’ does not mean excluding it from the wider field of ‘dance,’ for Mauss himself included ‘dancing’ in the array of techniques of the body (1979, p. 115).

Based on these premises, in this chapter, I examine: 1) the function of language, and its extension into imagery in butoh training; and 2) the contents of such language and imagery.

6.2 Butoh language, imagery and body

6.2.1 Language and training

Language, especially English language, played a crucial role in the butoh training I undertook in the course of my fieldwork and pre-fieldwork. In Japan, teachers taught in Japanese but they also ensured that a degree of English translation was available for non-Japanese participants. In the UK, Japanese and non-Japanese teachers taught in English, while often referring to classical Japanese butoh imagery.

Different teachers have different approaches to butoh, and such differences reflect the type of language and imagery they adopt in training. To be able to rely on the actual words used by the teacher helped my analysis of imagery in butoh. However, to comparatively assess butoh 'styles' on the basis of the language adopted in training is a possible, though not always straightforward, analytical trajectory. For instance, in the UK, workshop organizers were not always keen to allow participants to audio-record their classes. Although I found that this obstacle could be bypassed by asking permission directly from the teacher (who usually posed no objection), I often resolved to take my notes in the breaks or after the practice, so as not to interfere with the training. With *Café Reason*, however, I had several chances to audio-record the classes, as based on prior (and timely) arrangements with the teacher.

6.2.2 'Specific' and 'imaginative' butoh language

Based on my direct experience of a variety of butoh approaches, and on a more analytical and systematic work with *Café Reason*, I propose to describe language in butoh training as either 'specific' or 'imaginative.'

I shall refer to butoh language as 'specific' when it points toward something that one can easily identify as 'perceivable,' such as the body proper as we know it, i.e. specific body parts: arms, wrists, toes, etc. Words that identify the body and body parts may be accompanied by movements or gestures, which bring attention to the specific body parts that are being moved. 'Specific' butoh language can also suggest definite sensations within the body, of the body, or of body parts. In 'feel the weight of your body,' for instance, it is one's sense of gravity that is addressed. Or, in the expression 'pay attention to where your body is in space,' it is a sense of body shape and positioning that is addressed.²⁹ I shall refer to butoh language as 'imaginative' when it directs attention to something – an object, a landscape, or a physical phenomenon – that is not directly perceivable, or when the physical source of stimulation is not immediately detectable. Instead, it is language itself, and the imagery it evokes, that is the source of stimulation.

In butoh, as well as in other movement systems (for instance, contemporary dance and the martial arts), these two linguistic approaches or registers are combined. Thus, for instance, a teacher may point at something 'real,' or specific, such as a definite body part, but then ask to make 'something else' out of that body part. The following exercise taught by Ana as part of a warm up offers an example of combined use of 'specific' and 'imaginative' language.

²⁹ '[T]he body percept, or "body image," is a set of possible dispositions or poses – standing, or lying – relative to the substratum and to gravity' (Gibson 1966, p. 113).

You are just a back, floating in space, one huge, articulated back in the light.

Tiny ripples, twitches, big oozes.

You have no arms or legs. You are just a back. Drifting, high or low from the ground, floating, traveling over whole landscapes.

To your back, great curves of bone, round, the length of your articulated spine, huge ribs of bone, spreading out and round, growing, widening, curving round, enclosing a whole eco-system.

Sliding, gliding over your whole world of back and ribs, great wings of shoulder blades.... A beautiful girdle or collar.... Bone floating above.... Curving over, out, rippling sending great wings out in to the sky. And all the time your huge rib bone world moving, growing, enclosing.

Great wings into the sky. And in the distance far far away your star-wrists sparkling, shining their light in all directions from between the spaces of their articulation. Sparkling far away above your huge bone rib world.

Long beams of light from your stars in space shining the length of your tunnel fingers way to other universe/s, and beyond. Huge rays of light reaching out further and further. Further and further.

And then the light goes out. Your great rib world begins to die. Shrinking and dying crumbling, your bones begin to crumble...Crumble turning to dust.

Your great world of bone and whole eco-system turning to dust falling away, disintegrating.

You are just dust nothing but dust.

Dust settled on the ground.

And gradually the breeze lifts your particles takes you, scatters you, drifting, floating dust carried away on the wind.

You disappear.

In this example, the overlapping of 'real' (ribs, spine, etc.) and 'imaginary' (great wings, beams of light, etc.) elements is the starting point to make the dancers' bodies into something 'other.' Meanwhile, in the following excerpt, Ana provides a 'rationale' for choosing that particular type of imagery, explaining the 'effect' that the imagery was meant to have:

I had pre-prepared the image of 'you are just back, no arms or legs.' I wanted to move through different parts of the body in isolation and with different senses of scale. To discover new territories of your body: independent/abstracted. Most particularly to enable focus and try and find as much as possible in the back and not get weakened/distracted by limbs which move so easily/readily.

As I was dancing I realised that the image 'back' may be too two dimensional and that had not been exactly what I was trying to achieve, so I introduced the ribs to incorporate the wholeness of the back and all it may contain inside. From the ribs I wanted the sense of shoulders as initiators of movement for the arms and connected but independent from the ribs/back. In moving I realised that I didn't want the life in peoples' arms to stop there so I chose the stars for the wrists to give a sense of distance and remoteness but also energy (through light shining between joints/bones of wrist).

And then, again, without sending energy impulse all the way along to the tips the hand is dead. So I sent the light beams through the fingers, which I did not really want to name as such because I wanted to take people away from their familiar body. The only thing further than stars I could think of was other universes.

Once you have gone so far what else is there to do but disintegrate? Or rather I wanted not to stop there but allow people the chance to experience themselves differently.

Ana uses imagery to solicit relatively 'definite' physical responses. Meanwhile, the sentence 'I wanted to take people away from their familiar body' suggests that, for Ana, language can assist in generating a sense of one's body as 'other.'

I suggest that, in this case, 'otherness' is obtained first by 'isolating' or giving emphasis to specific body parts (back, ribs, etc.), and then by exploring the potential for movement of those body parts. Also, the juxtaposing of body parts with images of objects, territories, etc., works in the direction of de-familiarizing and de-contextualizing the body. In this respect, butoh imagery would be an attempt to undermine the dancer's 'body image'³⁰ and the perceptual relationships that make up such an image, by creating new, multiple – whilst fleeting – body images.

In the next section, I am going to examine the idea that imagery in general, and butoh imagery in particular, can affect not only one's view of the body, but also one's perception of it.

³⁰ The use of 'body-image' in this thesis relies on its formulation by neuroscientist Damasio (2006) and by psychologist Gibson (1966, p. 113), that is, as a mental representation of the body.

6.3 Imagery and the body: a quasi-perceptual link

Let us first consider 'image' and 'imagery' as generic terms, that is, outside the specific domain of butoh thought and action. We find that both 'image' and 'imagery' derive, by way of the French *image* and *imagerie*, from the Latin word *imāgo*, which means 'copy,' 'likeness,' 'imitation' (Partridge 1966). They are also found to entail an element of sensory appeal. For instance, Hawthorn (2000) defines an 'image' as '... figurative language in general or ... those elements of literary works to which the word *concrete* rather than *abstract*, seems suited, and which appear to have a certain sensuousness.' Hawthorn is careful to distinguish 'image' from 'picture.' While the latter is conventionally associated with 'representationality,' and thus with Realism, the former 'does not carry any necessary implication of the representational and has thus been favoured by anti-realists' (ibidem). That is, an image is more open-ended and less literal than a picture.

Like 'image,' also 'imagery' carries a reference to the concrete and the sensuous properties of what it attempts to copy. In the 'Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms' (Baldick 2004), 'imagery' is defined as 'a rather vague critical term covering those uses of language in a literary work that evoke sense-impressions by literal or figurative reference to perceptible or "concrete" objects, scenes, actions, or states as distinct from the language of abstract argument or exposition' (ibidem). Imagery may also refer to 'the act or process of forming mental images ... without stimulation of sense organs, or ... by memory and imagination, [and] including not only visual images but also images from the other senses, such as hearing, taste, smell, and touch' (Colman 2006).

Anthropologist Métraux (in Mead and Métraux 1953) similarly speaks of the ability of an image, or imagery, to recall sensuous experiences. She draws attention to the relationship between an image and its perceiver, to argue that an image may influence, or even shape the perceiver's perceptive system.

For Métraux, images have an important cultural function, for

... imagery is an expression of the perceptual system shared by the members of a society.... imagery has a selective and stylizing effect upon the perceptions of an individual, depending upon his innate capacities and cultural experience, and that it is both stabilized and continually modified as images are grouped and patterned in communication between individuals. Image then, as I am using the term, stands for any unit in the perceptual system through which individuals are related to one another in a culture (Métraux, in Mead and Métraux 1953, p. 350).

Taussig (1993) also calls attention to the sensuous, perceptual relationship between an image and its perceiver, a relationship that goes beyond the mere 'visual.' He emphasizes the need for 'breaking away from the tyranny of the visual notion of the image' (ibidem, p. 57) by bringing to the fore 'the bodily impact of imaging, to the point where Contact... become[s] the term required for conveying the physiognomic effect of imagery' (ibidem, p.58). Throughout Taussig's discussion, a view of mimesis as a modern equivalent of sympathetic magic emerges: both mimesis and sympathetic magic exploit the principle of imitation as contact and, thus, establish a 'palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived' (ibidem, p. 21). The notion of mimesis as a human faculty, rather than a theory, and especially 'a capacity that alerts one to the contactual element of the visual contract with reality' (Taussig 1993, p. 70), engenders further formulations of mimesis as a creative, at once abstract and practical, cultural process. Cox (2003), for instance, notes that '[t]he mimetic faculty is simultaneously the representation of aesthetic qualities and a representation, a creation that is embodied experience' (p. 107).

The notion of mimesis as human faculty may lead to the question of its biological basis and constitution. An important contribution in this direction comes from neuroscientist Damasio (2006), who postulated that the formation

of mental images intermingle with the perceptual system, to the point that one can no longer separate the 'mind' from the 'body.'

Jackson (1989) argues that images are linguistic transpositions of socio-cultural praxis (ibidem, p. 131). Everyday language is rich in metaphors, which are not mere lexical devices but 'verbal correlate of patterns of bodily use and interaction' (p. 145). By drawing from poetry and ethnography, Jackson shows that metaphors are thought devices, whose function is to restore the interrelationship between self, society and nature (p. 151). When the link between these domains is broken, for instance when a crisis occurs, metaphors restore the lost sense of unity. By means of analogy or 'transference' (p.151), metaphors coalesce the domains of the social, the natural, and of self/body: an image relating to the human body may be applied to the social world, or an image from nature to the body. Metaphors' concreteness allows one to transform one's relationship with one particular domain by way of control and manipulation of another, equivalent domain (ibidem, pp. 144-155). In fact, '...within the unitary field of body-mind-*habitus* it is possible to intervene and effect changes from any one of these points' (ibidem, p. 131, italics in original). Thus, metaphors have not only linguistic, but also instrumental value: '...metaphors are means of doing things and not merely ways of saying things' (p. 149). By virtue of their link with the body and the social world, images are powerful instruments of cultural knowledge and action, promoting equality, contiguity and interrelatedness among alternative domains.

While suggesting that 'even the most abstract word has a bodily resonance' (p. 142), Jackson admits that such resonances are usually 'below the threshold of awareness' (p. 143). The intellectualist tendency of privileging verbal over bodily praxis, and the semantic over the corporeal, has contributed to suppressing the bodily unconscious of language (ibidem, pp. 122-127). The ability of language to immediately recall corporeal experience has been questioned by Sheets-Johnstone (2011 [1999], p. 127; pp. 490-495).

She argues that everyday language is 'clumsy and inadequate' when it comes to convey the fundamental animation of being (2009, p. 363). Due to its tendency to reification, language is especially limited in conveying the dynamic essence of affective and kinesthetic experiences:

What is experientially felt both in an affective sense and in a kinesthetic sense clearly poses a challenge to language not only because such experiences are dynamic, but because language is not experience in the first place. Indeed, we experience the world and ourselves in wordless ways before we come to language our experience (ibidem, p. 364).

In order to retrieve the affective and tactile-kinesthetic dimensions to which linguistic concepts are ontogenetically anchored, and so overcome the understanding of linguistic concepts as lexical creations, Sheets-Johnstone calls for a reevaluation of figurative and metaphorical language (2009, p. 364-367). Drawing from the poetry of William Shakespeare, and the work of pediatrician Daniel Stern, Sheets-Johnstone shows that images can be used to convey experiential aspects of being, for instance what she names the 'experiences of insides' (ibidem, p. 367-373). If 'fine-grained kinetic terms to describe the created qualities of movement are hard to come by' (2011 [1999], p. 127), figurative and metaphorical language can convey corporeal, concrete, and dynamic nuances.

Having suggested that images and imagery conjure up sensory or sensory-like experiences, and that they are particularly apt at conveying the experiential nuances of being, I now want to turn to the use of images and imagery in butoh by asking the following question: What are the contents and functions of butoh images?

6.3.1 'The image moves you.' a perceptual link between the image and the body in butoh

In this section I illustrate some butoh exercises involving the use of images and attempt an explanation of their function. In line with Métraux (in Mead and Métraux 1953) and Taussig (1993) I argue that a 'perceptual relation' is established between a dancer and an image on the basis of 'sensory cues' that are, suggestively, 'embedded' in the linguistic and narrative structure of the image itself.

As an example, I would like to refer to a butoh image that was given at a *DaiRakudaKan* workshop in Tokyo, in 2007.³¹ Firstly, two members of *DaiRakudaKan* introduce the style of their company as 'stylish butoh,' while

³¹ When I was in Japan, in 2007, I mostly studied butoh at the Ohno School in Yokohama. Once, however, I attended a two-day workshop run by the company *DaiRakudaKan*, following one of their performances in Tokyo. This workshop gave me a different perspective on training and particularly on the use of imagery in butoh. In the Ohno approach – sometimes referred to as 'improvisational butoh' – there was no definite way of enacting an image, and the dancer was left free to interpret the image as he or she liked: since no clear, set relationship was established between the dancer and the image, the embodiment of images led to a variety of different outcomes. *DaiRakudaKan*'s approach, which stems directly from Hijikata via their leader Maro Akaji, emphasizes the 'mechanics' of embodying an image over the dancer's 'subjective' interpretation of the image. In practice, this means that when giving an image, *DaiRakudaKan* would also 'explain' how to execute the image, usually as a set of definite actions or movements. Workshop participants would then repeat the image several times to allow for the set of movements instructions to consolidate as a definite 'kinetic pattern' or flow. On this basis, *DaiRakudaKan*'s butoh can be seen as based on 'form' or 'choreography,' as opposed to Ohno's, which is based on improvisation.

contrasting it to the 'improvisational' style of the *Ohno School* in Yokohama.³² The main characteristic of 'stylish butoh,' they say, is that it is based on 'choreography' – they use the Japanese word *miburi*, which translates as 'gesture,' 'motion,' 'way of acting.' Secondly, and as a first step into stylish butoh, we are introduced to the practice of 'working with imagery.' We are told that the basic principle of working with an image in butoh is: 'The image moves you, not the other way around' and, as a way to explore this principle, we are given the following image: 'the space is full and the body is empty' [Plate 5]

Having already suggested that 1) an image can be understood as a sensuous or quasi-sensuous experience, and that 2) an image is meant to 'prevail' on the dancer's body ('the image moves you, not the other way around'), I suggest that the image of 'the space as full and the body as empty' can be seen as affecting the dancer's perception in two interrelated ways. Firstly, this image inverts the – Western – common sense notions of 'space' as a vacuum, and of 'body' as material and tangible, or 'full;' that is, by way of inversion, 'space' is turned into a tangible substance, e.g., a fluid, while the body is 'emptied' of its organs, bones, and muscles, to become like an empty shell. Secondly, and as a consequence of the first, the image 'the space as full and the body as empty' affects the dancer's relationship with his or her immediate environment, by directing the dancer's attention outwardly, or exteroceptively. This works in conjunction with the principle that the 'image moves the dancer:' by tuning in the image of a tangible, dynamic space, the dancer, whose body is now configured as empty, 'yields' agency to its surroundings. As 'agency' shifts from the dancer to the space, the interrelation between the body and space is amplified: any event within space conceived as such space – where

³² I have adopted the present tense for most 'ethnographic' descriptions in this chapter. This narrative strategy aims at drawing the reader's attention to the 'immediacy' of the physical experience, as outlined in Chapter Three.

by 'event' I refer to both imagined and actual physical forces – is bound to affect the dancer's body.

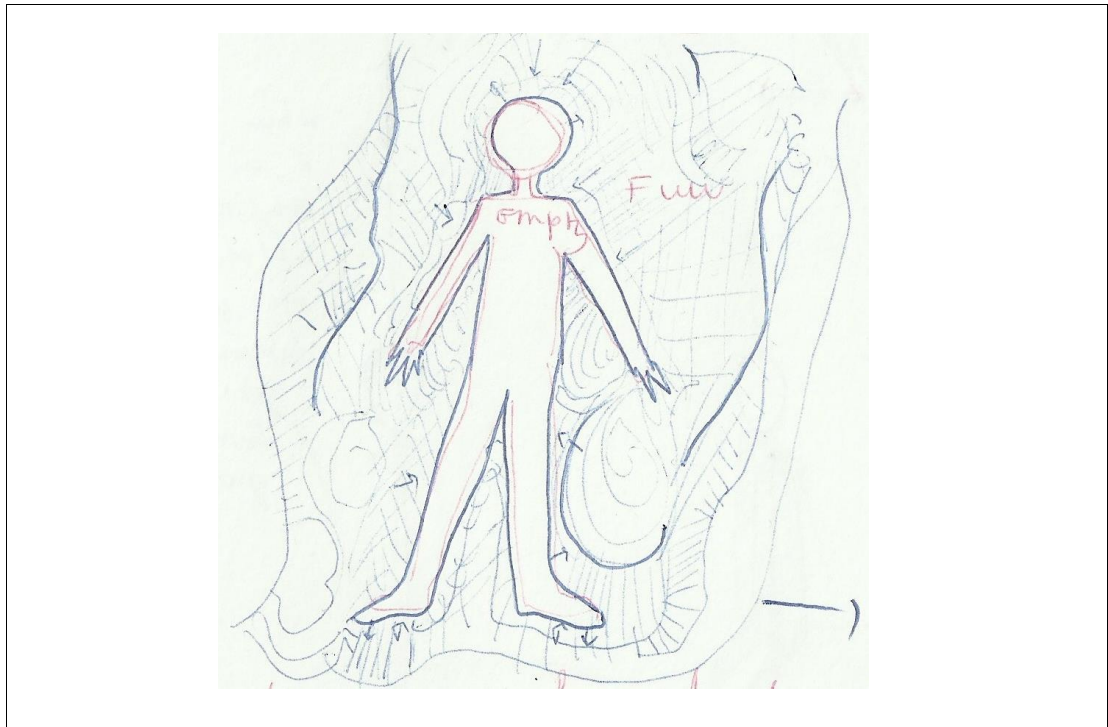


Plate 5: 'The image moves you; not the other way around'

Taussig (1993) describes the 'yielding attitude,' which I see as crucial in the process of embodying a butoh image, as intrinsic to the mimetic faculty. He argues that, from the Western philosophical perspective of the Enlightenment, the yielding attitude had negative connotations due to its central characteristic of 'passivity.'

In respect to mimesis as yielding, in contrast to Enlightenment science's aggressive compulsion to dominate nature, Adorno and Horkheimer go so far as to write of that "...trend which is deep-rooted in living beings, and whose elimination is a sign of all development: the trend to lose oneself in the environment instead of playing an active role in it; the tendency to let oneself go and sink back into nature. Freud called it the death instinct, Caillois "*le mimétisme*." Here the yielding component of

mimesis is presented in a passive, even frightening, sort of way; the self losing itself, sinking, decomposing into the surrounding world, a yielding that is, be it noted, despite apparent passivity, an act of both imitation and of contact (ibidem, p. 46).

I argue that the yielding attitude – ‘an act of both imitation and of contact’ – is common among butoh dancers, as manifested in the process of embodying the ‘space as full, body as empty’ image. Different versions of this image along with different modalities of ‘yielding’ appear across different butoh training contexts.

In 2006, in London, teacher Marie-Gabrielle Rotie proposes the classical butoh image of an embryo floating in amniotic fluid. We are asked to lie on our back and assume a fetal position, and to ‘remember what it felt like to be in the womb’ (Rotie, class communication). The image of the womb – ‘the mimetic organ par excellence’ (Taussig 1993, p. 35) – can be understood as another version of space as ‘full.’ Just like in other versions of this exercise, the body (embryo) and environment (womb) are here seen as interconnected.

In 2009, in Oxford, teacher Sayoko Onishi introduces us to an exercise that involved sensing the space with our eyes closed. As she explains the exercise, she says: ‘[i]n Japan we consider the air as a sort of water, just lighter than water’ (Onishi, workshop communication). She encourages us to keep this image in mind as we move in the space with our eyes closed.

In *Café Reason*, Jeannie often uses an exercise based on an image of ‘seaweed on the bottom of the sea.’ We are lying down in a circle, our bodies relaxed and spread out on the floor. The teacher claps her hands and we all lift the upper body at once, while the pelvis remains anchored to the ground. Arms and legs move like seaweed branches weaving in the water. While the exercise involves tensing the muscles in the abdomen, the image of seaweed

recalls the qualities of lightness and fluidity, which should be kept throughout the floating limbs and torso, as though the latter were supported and moved by the space-water. As the teacher claps her hands again we let our body fall on the ground, once again completely relaxed.

In *Café Reason*, Ana's voice leads us as we move in the space. We are told to 'just follow your body' and 'do whatever your body feels like doing.' After a few minutes, Ana asks us to start 'noticing other bodies around us' in the space, while keeping awareness of our own body. She devises the image of 'ripples' caused by the movement of others' bodies in space, traveling through the air and meeting us. She asks us to notice how the ripples affect the way we move.

While it recurs in a number of contexts, the imagery of 'space as full and body as empty' is by no means normative. As the imagery changes, the perceptual relations it entails also change. The image of an empty body, for instance, does not necessarily mean that such a body is being moved by an external force: it can be moved from the inside, as in the case in which such an empty body is 'filled' with something.

For instance, in a workshop with *DaiRakudaKan*, we are asked to start by squatting and imagine water coming up from the soles of our feet, gradually filling our body.³³ As it surges, the water lifts the body higher and higher. Having reached the highest point – where one is usually standing straight on the balls of one's feet – the body can then 'break' like a wave, hence returning to the initial squatting position. This image-cycle – of water coming up, lifting and then breaking down – is repeated several times to allow the dancer to achieve fluidity and so, suggestively, 'disappear' into a wave-like movement.

³³ I encountered the same image in a workshop with Murobushi in London, as well as in Rotie's classes in London.

In 2010, in London, teacher Djalma asks participants to play with the notions of 'empty' and 'full' by suggesting that first the space and then the body are made of water (Djalma, workshop communication). We thus explore how these two opposite images affect our perception and the way we move.

To sum up my discussion so far, I have argued that the notion of the 'empty body' in butoh implies that the body can be moved from the outside as well as from the inside. In both cases, the dancer can be seen as granting decisional power to the image and, to that extent, 'losing control' over his or her body - or 'yielding.'

At this stage of my analysis, it may appear that the interrelation image-body is something occurring in the dancers' mind, rather than something 'actual' or 'real.' Indeed, the step from 'visualizing an image' to 'being danced by an image' is not an immediate one. Ultimately, images are not meant to linger in the dancer's mind, but to overlap with his or her psychophysical condition, so that the dancer and the image 'become one' (Kasai, personal communication). To understand this, we need to grasp the relationship that a butoh dancer establishes with an image as one in which the image itself is not a disembodied sign, but a perceived entity.

It is thus to the process of embodying a butoh image that I now turn. Having already argued, in the previous chapter, that butoh 'techniques of desocialisation' are *de facto* modalities of sensory enculturation, I henceforth propose that a butoh dancer's effort to become an image is to be taken seriously: the dancer's experience of an image can be nearly as concrete as his or her everyday experience of the world.

6.3.2 'You are made of wax, and you are slowly melting:' senses of gravity, motion and shape

I want to draw attention to the active yielding of the perceiver in the perceived—the perceiver trying to enter into the picture and become one with it, so that the self is moved by the representation into the represented.

Taussig (1993, p. 61)

What is too often overlooked is that art is a form of symbolization, and what underlies every symbol is a desire to represent something that *is* by means of something which it *is not*. In order for a representation to convey meaning, it must highlight some aspects of the something-which-it-is-not that bears at least a tenuous similarity to the something-that-is.

Foster (1994, p. 384)

On the basis of the notion that I elaborated in the previous section, i.e. that butoh images are quasi-perceptual entities, in this section I will give an interpretation of the process of embodying or dancing a butoh image.

The first example I would like to refer to is an image of 'melting wax,' which was given by Ana in one of her *Café Reason* classes. In recollecting this exercise from memory, I have divided it in six 'stages,' including a beginning and an ending.

[Beginning:] Begin from standing.

[Stage 1:] You are made of wax, and you are slowly melting [Plate 6]

[Stage 2:] You have melted: let go of any further resistance, abandon your body completely to the floor [Plate 7]

[Stage 3:] A giant hand grabs your body and sculpts it, until your form is

brought, once again, to standing [Plate 8]

[Stage 4:] Once you stand, pause, watch your form, watch your weight....Where is the weight in your body? [Plate 9]

[Ending:] Relax.

I am now going to examine, stage-by-stage, the 'sensory cues' that are embedded in the image of 'melting wax.'³⁴

The starting position is important as this is the moment where the dancers 'receive' the image. This moment can last a few minutes, as different dancers take different amounts of time to 'absorb' the images before they begin to move.

In this case, we start from a standing position. Often, when starting from such a position, an image of 'burning candle' is used, by analogy to the stature and pose of the dancer's upright body. For instance, in Jeannie's version, a flame burns on the dancers' heads while their wax-bodies gradually melt.

The word 'melting' evokes a quality of *softening*. More specifically, 'melting' associated with the word 'wax,' signals a change of state, from *solid* to *fluid*. The idea of physical *transition*, or transmutation of substance, gives a cue as to the type of movement to be enacted: for instance, *softening* suggests muscular relaxation and giving in to gravity, while *wax* offers a cue for density, and resistance to gravity. The combination of relaxation and resistance, against the time lapse in which the exercise occurs, provides the *tempo* for embodying the image, that is, the rhythm for the dance.

³⁴ The plates accompanying the analysis should be taken merely as visual references, and as a suggestion of the type of relationship that I perceived as established between the images and the body, at the time I performed this exercise in the class.

The image of 'melting wax' suggests a shift in the dancer's relationship with gravity. The dancer responds to the idea of melting wax by beginning to surrender to gravity. Since we started from a standing position, the 'melting' occurs on a vertical plane. What is seen from the outside is a human body that behaves not like a human body, but like wax.

I argue that the appearance of wax is an illusion the dancer him/herself produces via a proprioceptive negotiation of the sense of weight that, through a constant shift, elicits minimal muscular responses [*Plate 6*]. As the dancers reach the floor, the teacher encourages them to let go of all muscular tension. The horizontal plane substitutes the vertical one [*Plate 7*].

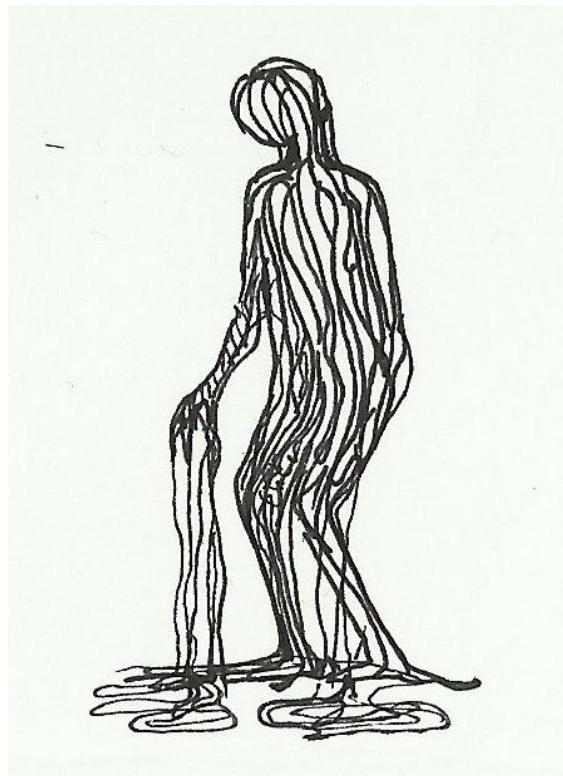


Plate 6: 'You are made of wax, slowly melting'

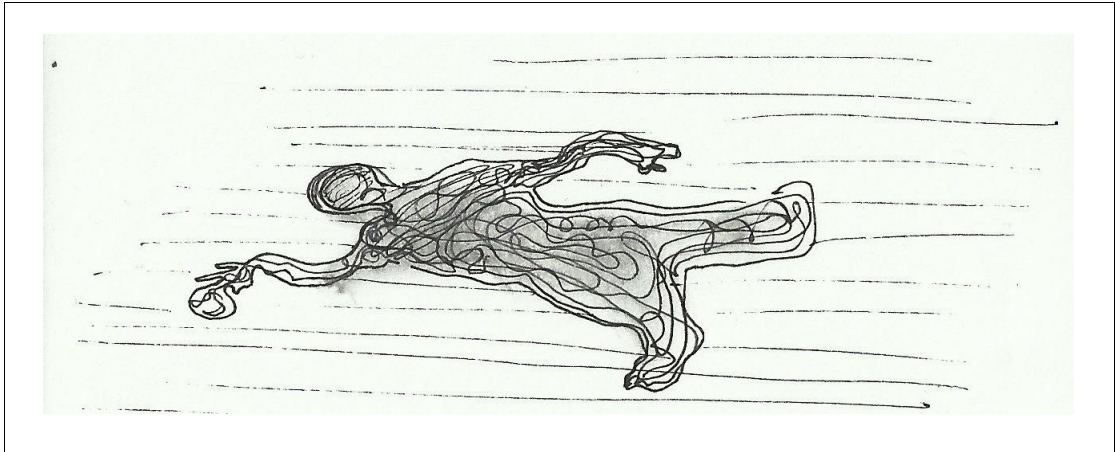


Plate 7: 'Once you have melted on the floor, watch your form, let go of all remaining tensions, until your weight has completely melted on the floor.'

Finally, the dancer exploits gravity by 'pushing' against it, to pull the body back up. The image of a 'giant hand sculpting the body' allows the dancer to maintain a double focus: inside towards the shifting of body weight and balance, and outside towards the overall body shape. At this stage I prefer using the plural 'weights' as opposed to the singular 'weight.' This is because, in bringing the body back to standing, a dancer may lose the sense of his or her body as unified, while experiencing a sense of displacement of body parts [Plate 8].

Once the dancers are back to standing, the teacher encourages them to 'observe' the shape they are in, and to 'observe' where the bodily weight is [Plate 9]. The notion of 'observation' here is literal in that the teacher says 'watch your form' and 'watch your weight.' In line with the argument traced in the previous chapter, I argue that, while invoking the sense of vision, here the notion of 'watching' has less to do with vision, such as in seeing an object outside oneself, than with what in Chapter Five I referred to as optical tactility-kinesthesia, in which the dancer draws a synopsis of one's body shape(s), by rooting it in a proprioceptive sense of the body proper or 'percept' (Gibson 1966, p.113). That is, 'watching one's form' corresponds to producing an 'imaginary construction' of one's body as grounded not in vision but in tactility-kinesthesia (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 115).

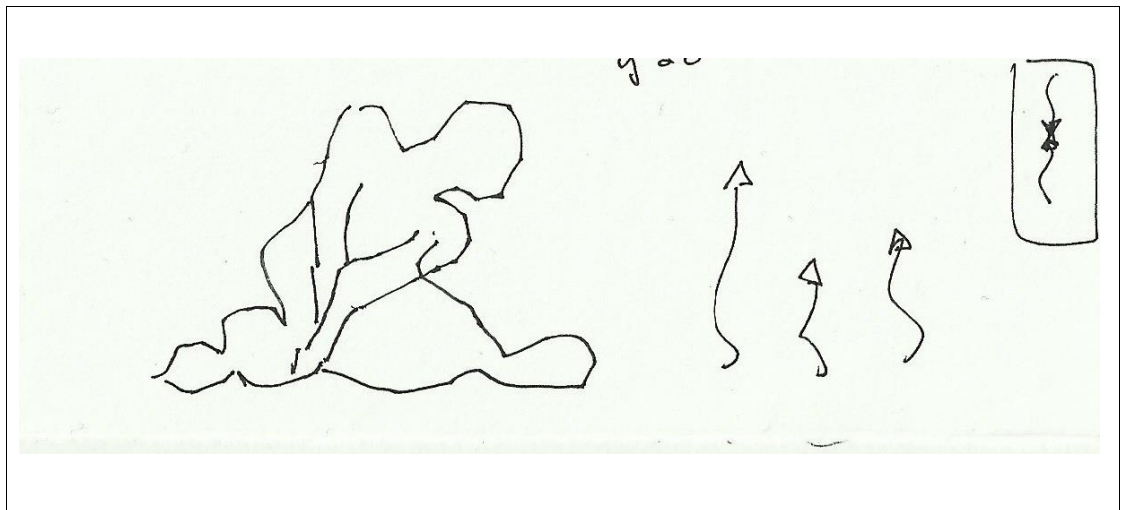


Plate 8: 'Something or someone is sculpturing you: slowly push your form together, tiny bits together, recomposing yourself up'



Plate 9: 'When you are up again, watch your form'

The imagery of a 'ball of wool being pulled in all directions' works in a similar way as the image of 'melting wax,' but leads to diametrically opposed aesthetic outcomes. This image goes like this:

Find a place in the space and take a position on the floor.

You are a ball of wool.

You are being pulled in all directions

Until you come to standing.

In this exercise one starts from lying or sitting on the floor. This time, instead of being 'sculptured,' one is 'being pulled' in various directions. The basic action of rising to standing is similar to the second part of the 'melting wax' image, though the modality of coming to stand is different: the image of wool evokes the qualities of softness and relaxation, while the notion of 'being pulled in all directions' evokes mobility combined with tension. Also, the dancer's body expands outwardly as opposed to collapsing inwardly.

6.3.3 Butoh imagery as 'sensory notation'

In light of the analysis above, I argue that the butoh imagery can be understood as an intuitive type of movement notation, in which words – such as 'weight,' 'melt,' 'shape,' 'wax', etc. – correspond to 'sensory cues.' A dancer identifies such cues and interprets them in movement terms.

In the context of *Café Reason*, the dancer can choose to respond to the cues, or ignore them altogether, and find new ones. Sensory cues are merely pointed at by the narrative layout of an image: ultimately, it is the dancer who subjectively selects and decides what aspects of an image he or she wants to relate to. In this respect, a butoh image can be understood as an open-ended, multi-sensory construct.

The relationship between a dancer and an image can be seen as mimetic: when the dancer is given enough time 'to soak up' the image, his or her proprioceptive sense of body structure, weight or movement changes in accordance to the given aesthetic structure of an image, or the elements of that image that he or she has decided to relate to. A dancer's processing of an image is, in this sense, analogical, and such an analogy, or 'structural concordance' (Foster 1994, p. 385) takes place at the level of movement and nervous responses. As in early forms of 'exploitations of likeness' (Foster, *ibidem*, pp. 385–392), embodiment of imagery in *butoh* is not picture- or noun-oriented, but process- or verb-oriented. In fact, whether evoking a landscape, a thing or a physical process (i.e. melting, decomposing, etc.), a *butoh* image entails motor and spatial relationships. It is thus the 'scheme of movement,' which is also intrinsic to symbolic representation (Durant 2009), that organizes the dynamic significance of *butoh* images (*ibidem*, p. 161).

Liao (2006, pp. 100-101) has come to a similar conclusion concerning the sensory structure of *butoh* imagery from a philosophical and phenomenological perspective. In his study of the choreographic works of Japanese *butoh* masters – particularly of *butoh* dancers' employment of texts for choreographic creation – Liao remarks that *butoh* texts "'beckon" the textures and qualities of images' (*ibidem*). Liao emphasizes the use of verbs and adjectives in the constitution of *butoh* imagery: '.... the overall situation [evoked by an image] may be perceived and embodied through the sequence of "*actions*" revealed through those verbs' while 'adjectives "beckon" the textures to come forth and to be perceived....' (*ibidem*, p. 100).

It is to this extent that I refer to *butoh* images as sensory 'notation' or 'templates:' these notions serving to better acknowledge the sensuous nature of *butoh* images and their role in the wider system of *butoh* dance.

6.4 Variations of butoh imagery in *Café Reason*

In the previous section I argued that butoh imagery conjures up associations with the concrete, the sensuous, and the experiential. In so doing, I concentrated on the kind of butoh imagery that *explicitly* entails dynamic and sensuous information, so that the image itself is understood not as a static picture but as a dynamic, sensuous construct. I have also shown how a dancer can relate to the perceptual or quasi-perceptual reality of an image by detecting its key sensory, spatial and motor components, which are suggested by the teacher's words.

Dance and performance studies scholars Riley (2004) and Liao (2006) have also alerted us to the dynamic and sensuous properties of 'classical' butoh imagery. What remains to be addressed is that different butoh teachers use different types of imagery, and that not all such imagery explicitly exudes dynamic, physical or sensuous qualities.

For instance, within the group *Café Reason*, two different approaches to butoh imagery can be found: one is Ana's, which is based on images that entail explicit sensory and perceptual cues; the other is Jeannie's, based on more abstract, or less sensorially explicit images.

In the following sections, I shall elaborate on the two *Café Reason* teachers' diverging approaches to butoh imagery. I shall consider the implications that this difference has for the teachers themselves and, less directly, for the butoh group as a whole.

6.4.1 Ana: from form to emotion

Gesture is the basic abstraction whereby the dance illusion is made and organized. Gesture is vital movement; to the one who performs it, it is known very precisely as a kinetic experience To others it appears as a visible motion, but not a motion of things, sliding or waving or rolling around – it is *seen and understood* as vital movement.

Langer (1953, pp. 174, Langer's italics).

As I gathered through informal discussion with individual members of the group, *Café Reason* members share a view that Ana is more concerned with 'form,' whereas Jeannie is more concerned with 'emotions.' The two teachers seem to agree with this perspective. Ana, for instance, says:

I start with form. My previous teacher, Lina,³⁵ would start with form; her method was really that of 'observing' the body whatever it does. So it was really about being present at each moment. Her approach was also very much about 'non-ego,' and 'no-mind.' Following the body and seeing what forms it takes, and seeing if a form takes place that resonates somehow with the audience.

As she speaks, sitting on the floor, Ana looks at her right arm while it floats up, the rest of her body remaining still. As the arm keeps floating, Ana notices how it also keeps minimally changing shape, while constantly rearranging its position in mid-air: turning, shifting, stretching, etc.

At that point you pause, and let that form [of your arm] transmit

³⁵ Lina Young, from the Malaysia-based butoh company *Taro Dance Theatre*, of which Ana was a member.

something to the audience. So it is very much about form.

... I don't really work with emotions. This is the main difference between my approach and Jeannie's approach (Ana, personal conversation, audio-recorded).

Although Ana explains that her approach is based on 'form,' it would be inaccurate to define such an approach as completely devoid of 'emotion.' For instance, when Ana says, 'at that point you pause, and let that form [of your arm] transmit something to the audience,' she is suggesting that the shape of a movement or a pose can trigger meaningful associations in the audience, including emotional associations. That is, Ana's view implies a notion of body – in its multidimensional articulations as gesture, motion, expression, posture, etc. – as a medium for communication (Bell 1997, pp. 139-142). It also implies a notion of 'meaning' or 'content' in dance based on the analogical resonance of dance with non-dance movements (Langer 1953; Gell 1985).

So far, I have argued that Ana's approach starts with 'body,' and that 'form' is a consequence of following the body 'whatever it does.' Meanwhile, the moving body can bring about a semantics of emotion. It is not only that a particular body-form can influence the audience, who may read a particular emotional content into it, but it can also stir up emotions in the dancer, for instance, by stimulating – via gesture, posture or movement – the dancer's body memories.

Ana explains that she found a similar attitude toward movement and emotion in the teaching of performer Yael Karavan, who calls the process of generating emotional states through the changing of one's body shape and movement qualities, a process of creating 'emotional landscapes,' where 'landscape' is a metaphor for the changing configuration of the body, while 'emotional' refers to how such changed configurations resonate with a dancer's (or an audience's) experiences and sensibilities. I will further explore this aspect in Chapter Seven, where I describe the work of Yael Karavan.

6.4.2 Jeannie: from emotion to form

While Ana starts with 'body' and explores how changes in the body bring about emotion, Jeannie often starts with the idea of, or evoking, an emotion, and explores how the body changes in response to that. In the context of Jeannie's work with *Café Reason*, I have identified two main ways into emotion-centred imagery, both of which aim at conveying particular emotional conditions. In identifying these two approaches I have relied on Hanna's classification of different possible inter-relations between dance and emotion (1983, p. 182).

As an anthropologist of dance, Hanna (1983) has identified four main paths through which a dancer can relate to an 'emotion' through dance. These are *a)* a dancer feels an emotion and expresses it through dance; *b)* a dancer tries to create an emotion by recollecting a situation in which he or she felt that emotion, and then uses it as a stimulus for the dance (e.g., as in Stanislavski's 'method acting'); *c)* a dancer recollects emotion and 'expresses it symbolically, not actually' (p. 182); and *d)* a dancer is induced to emotion by the dancing, i.e., via the altered physical state provoked by the dance (*ibidem*).

Whereas Ana's approach, which I discussed in the previous section, best matches *d)* 'a dancer is induced to emotion by the dancing,' Jeannie's approach corresponds with both *b)* 'a dancer tries to create an emotion by recollecting a situation in which he or she felt that emotion, and then uses it as a stimulus for the dance' and *c)* 'a dancer recollects emotion and 'expresses it symbolically, not actually' (Hanna 1983, p. 182). An example of Hanna's path *a)*, 'a dancer feels an emotion and expresses it through dance,' can be found in section 6.4.4, where Bitzia argues that butoh allows her to 'release' and 'express' her 'negative emotions.'

In the next two sections I will discuss Jeannie's use of emotion-centred

imagery by way of two examples: the first is drawn from the making of the performance *Orpheus* (2008); and the second is drawn from the making of the performance *Matrix* (2011).

6.4.2.1 Retrieving emotions from life experiences: the making of the Orpheus

An example of 'b) a dancer tries to create an emotion by recollecting a situation in which he or she felt that emotion, and then uses it as a stimulus for the dance,' took place in the making of the butoh rock opera *Orpheus* (2008), a collaboration between the butoh group *Café Reason*, led by Jeannie, and the rock band *Nonstop Tango*, led by Malcolm and Miles.

The central idea behind this collaboration was to revisit the Greek myth of Orpheus in a contemporary modality. The journey of Orpheus into the Underworld to rescue Eurydice was used as a reflection on themes of love (Orpheus and Eurydice loving each other) and the end of love (Eurydice dying and Orpheus setting off to the Underworld to bring her back).

Such themes resonated with the life experiences of the group leaders, Jeannie, Malcolm and Miles. For instance, Miles explained that

I am the divorced father of three adult children all of whom still struggle to accommodate my narrative alongside their mother's in their understanding of what happened to their parents' relationship. For me *Orpheus* was a further attempt to help them with this. What happens to truth if making sense of something requires you to hold two or more contradictory beliefs as equally true? (Miles, questionnaire answer)

In the performance the two distinct genres of butoh dance and of rock music were used to convey the 'different sides of the story,' that is, as told by

Eurydice and Orpheus respectively.

As part of the process of retrieving material for the performance, the dancers and the musicians were asked to consider their real-life experiences of falling in and out of love. Memories and significances would thus be fed back into the creative process, in the form of either movement or music. One example of those explorations took place one evening at Miles' house,' where, as part of the leaders' plan, we all gathered to work on one particular act in the performance, which was called 'A Serious Game.'

As part of the exploration of 'A Serious Game', we changed into the costumes of the performance – men in black suits, women in evening dresses – and gathered in the dining room, where we chatted and sipped wine for a while. Then, the leaders explained the rules of the 'serious game' to the rest of the group.

Taking turns, each person was led by two others into a separate room, blindfolded, lost their sense of direction, and was finally guided back to sit back at the dining table, where they were awaited by the other participants, who impersonated a committee of 'underworldly creatures.' Still blindfolded, the person was made to wear washing up gloves and red lipstick. Finally, s/he would be asked questions concerning love and the end of love, to which s/he would respond by drawing from his or her life experiences. Each interview lasted between ten and fifteen minutes. All participants were made aware that their interviews were being recorded in order to produce source material that would be then edited to produce a voice-scape for the piece.

The main idea behind this exploration was that each of us was embarking on a 'journey into the Underworld' to explore memories and feelings of our past loves. The washing up gloves contributed to create the sense of sensory deprivation, which was associated with death (Jeannie, personal

conversation), while the red lipstick meant that one 'had to tell the truth' (Jeannie, personal conversation) in the sense that, in answering the questions, one had to draw from real life experiences.

In the days that followed the making of the 'Serious Game,' an exchange of group emails revealed that sharing of real-life emotional experiences had had an unsettling impact on the participants. Some of the participants described the thought, reflections, emotions that the process had triggered in them. For instance:

Last night I sat up in my attic and couldn't think of going to bed. Just sat there for ages with all that stuff that had come up and continues to come up. ... Thoughts on love, wanting to be in love as a need to be loved and feel special, valid. The insecurities and irritations of actual relationship. (A dancer³⁶, group email)

Another dancer reflected on how the combination of therapy and art made the creative process 'rich and profound.' Meanwhile, the sense of how challenging that process had been also came through:

I hurtled into a really difficult place...haunted by memories and feelings of being disempowered, manipulated and.... of being used! ... I am sorry if I let the little abandoned child in me to take over – I feel the combination of Art and Therapy is what makes this creative process, particularly Butoh, so rich and profound! (A dancer, group email).

Following that night, I also went through an emotionally complicated week. This was partly related to the fact that, in that same period, an important

³⁶ Because very personal feelings are being expressed, I prefer to maintain the anonymity of my informants in this case.

relationship in my life had increasingly become uncertain, evolving into a definitive break up in the following months. The interrogation did not simply mean disclosing aspects of my personal life to people who were essentially strangers, it also brought up emotions I could not appropriately distance myself from, because at that time I found myself in the midst of them. Meanwhile, I did not want to drop out of the project, which represented my first true fieldwork experience with the group *Café Reason*.

As the making of *Orpheus* proceeded, tensions among members of the production, especially between dancers and musicians, grew. Partly, this was due to the intense work of rehearsals, and partly because the two groups, *Café Reason* and *Nonstop Tango*, had different working patterns.

Malcolm, explained that the tensions between the two groups were

...due to the fact that musicians communicate effectively on stage and need no pre-performance rituals to establish trust. Dancers need this because they are vulnerable (Malcolm, questionnaire answer)

Meanwhile, for Jeannie,

...dance uses a lot of touch and body-focused preparation to warm-up and attune to each other, to enhance the quality of interaction in the movement. Musicians are all frightened of touch and women (Jeannie, questionnaire answer).

The conflict between dancers and musicians was also associated with the opposition between Orpheus and Eurydice in the story:

I think we became victims of projection, that the narrative of the relationship breakdown being told by the two different sides got

projected by each side onto the other (Miles, questionnaire answer).

Also, dealing with emotions associated with 'male-female' dynamics was seen as generating 'archetypal' behaviors that affected the relations between co-performers:

It sounds very kind of crazy, but it was like these kind of powerful archetypes have got a life, an accepted life, and they kind of wanted to find expression, and they just used us; we were a kind of vehicle for them to get their stuff out into the world. ...I felt we were just like....children playing with fire really (Jeannie, personal conversation, audio-recorded).

I see them as templates you step into. ... I think that the templates of methods of interaction are very archetypal, and you slip into these archetypes without realising it. And you get taken over by them, your behavior gets fashioned by them, without your actually realising what is happening, but you can't actually stop going.... And that's the base of lots of tragedies, the fact that you slip into a mode of behavior which actually you can't control (Malcolm, personal conversation, audio-recorded).

Orpheus started with an 'art therapy' intent: that of using real life emotions in order to produce art, and thus, in a sense, of using art to make sense to life. However, the strategy of summoning up emotions by delving into past experiences prevented some performers from appropriately taking distance from the emotions themselves. Meanwhile, the re-living of past relationships might have reinforced perceptions of a male-female 'power struggle' between the two groups, leading to further, and possibly unnecessary, emotional turmoil.

In this section I have described an emotion-centred approach to dance

imagery based on recollecting emotions through recollection of life experiences – i.e. falling in love, being in love and breaking up with someone. In the next section I will discuss a different emotion-centred approach to dance imagery, as based on an understanding of emotions mainly as ‘symbolic forms.’

6.4.2.2 *Emotion as form: the Ten Buddhist Worlds of Existence*

It is *imagined feeling* that governs the dance, not real emotional condition.

Langer (1953, p. 177, Langer’s emphasis)

In preparation for one of the pieces for *Matrix* (2011), Jeannie proposed to work with a set of images referring to the *Ten Buddhist Worlds of Existence*, namely, different steps of spiritual evolution in the Nichiren Buddhist tradition:³⁷ Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Tranquillity, Rapture (or Heaven), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva, and Buddha.

In the exercise, each participant started off by sitting on a chair and, having left the chair, danced the entire series of word-states for up to three minutes. Jeannie said that it was okay if we did not manage to go through all the words in the given time and that the important thing was to keep ‘switching’ from one state into another.

My reading of this exercise was that, while the words referring to the *Ten Buddhist Worlds* did not contain any particular or definite sensuous cue, they evoked specific psychophysical conditions that could be understood as bodily,

³⁷ At the time when Jeannie proposed this imagery in the class, she had recently embraced Nichiren Buddhism.

behavioral and feeling manifestations (Damasio 2006, pp. 126-164) and thus, in essence, as motion³⁸ or 'action' (Elias 1987, in Burkitt 1999, p.118). Most crucially, because the emphasis was put not so much on delving into each state, as on *transiting* from one into another, one could not get engrossed with any word-state in particular, but had to keep 'switching' from one into another.

This aspect of 'switching' helped the dancers to recognise the extent to which the word-state could be only symbolically 'acted out' as opposed to being intensely 're-lived' in connection with personal experiences, as had happened in the making of the *Orpheus*.

6.4.3 Relations between Ana and Jeannie

I have argued that both Ana's and Jeannie's styles of imagery aim at bringing forth the body. In doing so, they follow diverging trajectories: whereas Ana 'seeks' the body through language and imagery that *directly* evokes physical sensations, Jeannie seeks the body through language and imagery that *indirectly* evokes physical sensation, that is, via reference to emotional or mind states. In so doing, they put emphasis on different sides of butoh: Ana on the aesthetic and the performative, and Jeannie on the emotional and the therapeutic.

As for the way these differences inform the relations between the two women, although Ana and Jeannie appear to be friends who usually support each other's creative endeavors, a degree of competitive tension underlies their relationship and their roles within the butoh group. On a few occasions these tensions became palpable, such as in the production of the theatre

³⁸ The word 'emotion' stems from the French *émouvoir*, and the Latin *ēmovēre*, 'to move out from...', 'to move out of...' (Partridge 1966).

performance *Matrix* (2011). *Matrix* included several solos and duets by members of *Café Reason*, as well as two group pieces, one choreographed by Ana, the other by Jeannie. The process of trying to decide who, among *Café Reason* dancers, should take part in the group pieces turned out to be difficult because Ana and Jeannie argued over which of the dancers should be in their respective pieces. The antagonistic behavior that the two women displayed on that occasion put off many members of the group, and led one of the dancers to temporarily withdraw from taking part in either of the pieces.

While it is difficult to identify the actual root of this tension, Jeannie once admitted to me that it mostly comes from herself, because – ‘depending on my level of paranoia’ – she worries over her role in the group being overshadowed by Ana’s³⁹.

On one level it’s not very important but it feels like fighting for survival sometimes. And I know that most of the time it is my own paranoia, because, when I talked to her about it, she does not see it like that at all,⁴⁰ so it must be something in me. I think probably for me it is a lot of jealousy as well, ‘cause she is such a fantastic performer and I often feel very inadequate.

When, in the course of the interview, I suggest that their roles in *Café Reason* can be seen as ‘complementary’ to one another, Jeannie says with a little surprise: ‘That’s a positive word. That’s a very positive word.’

³⁹ In the interview, Jeannie specified that ‘it is alright’ if I mention these personal issues in my thesis.

⁴⁰ Ana says: ‘I don’t like being cross with people because I cannot stand confrontation’ (Ana, personal communication). Ana’s response reveals her own responsibility in the entire process, in that she is avoiding the tension – ‘...I cannot stand confrontation’ – rather than acknowledging it.

When you said ‘complementary,’ I was thinking that for me it is more like ‘parasitic,’ [in the sense that] I really need her. In the past, when I haven’t felt very strong, and she’s taken a class when I haven’t felt up to it, I really appreciated that. ... I don’t think I would really be able to do it without her, and even if she’s not there, I feel that she is there, [for] her presence is.... She is quite a Muse for me, she’s quite inspiring.

Again, I know that it is my own stuff, ‘cause I know that she has her own creativity and her own stuff that [at times] is quite unrelated to *Café Reason*, and I think sometimes she has her own agenda, but for me she is quite an important character in my creative processes.

Based on such perceptions, it is perhaps not surprising that Jeannie uses ‘emotions’ as a source of inspiration for her butoh training. For instance, she also mentions that ‘...struggling is quite productive, creatively: it’s good to have things to work out.’⁴¹

⁴¹ Jeannie has complicated relationships with other members and collaborators of *Café Reason* as well. For instance, in 2011, Malcolm, who was a long term collaborator and musician for the group, interrupted his relationship with *Café Reason* due to discordances with Jeannie.

Jeannie's training as a dance therapist informs her particular approach to the dance. For instance, she says that sometimes her butoh training overlaps with Authentic Movement (hereafter referred to as AM),⁴² which is a movement practice that allows one to

...get into a state where you can allow inner things to arise, things from your imagination or images from your unconscious; sometimes when we do performance I have often used AM to try to allow material to surface. That's certainly another ingredient [of my teaching]: trying to get to a state where your mind is quiet enough that that dream [and unconscious] material can surface (Jeannie, personal communication).

While work with unconscious material in AM can be understood as a self-referential creative process, framed by the therapeutic language of 'self-exploration' and 'growth,' in butoh, similar processes and materials can, according to Jeannie, be brought on stage for the sake of performance.

Sometimes AM is used in [butoh] performance but the focus is all on the inner journey, and the personal development, whereas with butoh I think it is using that material, that inner material and then giving it a performance focus.

⁴² AM is a dance therapy technique that consists in working in pairs, one person watching and the other moving. The person moving starts by keeping their eyes closed to focus on their inner processes; they wait for stimuli to arise spontaneously from inside themselves and then follow those impulses in the form of movement. As a mover begins improvising with those impulses, the witness just watches attentively. At the end of the improvisation, both the mover and the witness draw 'their experiences' of the dance, or 'what they saw,' on a sheet of paper. They then exchange verbal comments on what happened based on what they drew. In AM, it is important that the witness expresses his or her view on the dance in a non judgemental way. In the second part of the practice, the mover and the witness exchange roles (Jeannie, personal conversation).

And I think that ... participants in classes find it quite a strong, quite a powerful experience, and quite transformative and very interesting... but very personal.... [A]nd then the idea to turn that into a performance.... Some people find it very alien and strange and unappealing, whereas for me, I just think that is what it is all about really. It's rare that you see that kind of stuff on a stage.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that in Jeannie's version of butoh, 'therapy' and 'performance' overlap. This is not at all uncommon among butoh dancers generally, though different dancers tend to emphasize either the therapeutic or the artistic element in butoh, as I will show in the next section.

6.4.4 Between art and therapy

Café Reason member Bitzia's understanding of butoh reveals, like Jeannie's, an 'overlap' between 'therapy' and 'performance.' In recalling when she first joined Jeannie's butoh classes in Oxford, she says that 'I could see immediately that it was a kind of therapy for me and a way to be able to tune into myself on a deeper level.... I could see that it was helping me explore who I really was' (Bitzia, personal communication).

Besides being one of the founding members of *Café Reason*, Bitzia is a Classical Indian Bharatanatyam dancer – a dance style that she learnt as a child living in Southern India – and a Yoga teacher. Asking her about how she handles her simultaneous relationship with two very different dance forms – the very formal Bharatanatyam and the 'formless' butoh – she explains that 'it is like having two twins that I need to feed. I need to have both. But they feed different parts of me.' She also says that the two practices inform each other:

Now I feel comfortable with that, whereas before I had a bit of a dilemma as to whether I was keeping integrity of the two by letting them inform each other; but actually now I see it as a beautiful addition, rather than something that is slightly watering down or dissipating one form into another – or one way of being into another.

As for butoh, she says that it has allowed her to integrate the negative emotions in her life.

With the butoh I can express all the ugliness and the anger and the deep frustration ... and by exploring that I am actually releasing it and finding some kind of skill ... to be able to deal with those emotions – You can learn about yourself by finding tools, whether it is through meditation or imagery, and butoh embraces all those things, doesn't it?

[Sometimes] I have got all that nasty kind of ugliness going on, and butoh is a wonderful way of actually being able to work through that ugliness and all those awful feelings....And, you kind of release it, or you share it, you kind of expose it. And then [once I shared or exposed it], I am back in that wonderful, beautiful space.... (Bitzia, personal conversation, audio recorded).

The possibility of 'finding tools' to be able to work through 'the ugliness' of some emotions is central to Bitzia's relationship with butoh. At the intersection of those two, that is, between 'tools' and 'ugliness,' or 'technique' and 'negative emotions,' one can read the same dynamic tension between 'control' and 'loss of control' that, in Chapter Five, I identified as one of the paradigms of butoh's aesthetic efficacy. The same tension can be seen as the basis of butoh's status as art and therapy simultaneously.

However, Japanese butoh dancer, choreographer and teacher Sayoko Onishi rejects the notion that butoh is a form of therapy: 'Butoh is performance art,

not therapy.’ Yet, she also admits that some people may use butoh from a therapeutic point of view, although ‘that’s not really what butoh is about’ (Onishi, personal conversation). Onishi’s understanding of butoh as performance informs her style of teaching: in one of her UK workshops, in 2009, as we are about to embody a classical ‘Hijikata’ butoh image, ‘the ghost,’ she reminds the – mostly Western – participants:

Remember that we are *faking*, and that the emotions are *fake*, that pain is *fake*. This is what Hijikata did. He created the fake-body. [For instance,] [i]n order to dance pain, we do not feel pain directly’ (Onishi, workshop communication, my emphasis).

Onishi’s preoccupation with clarifying her approach to butoh practice stems from finding that participants in her workshops, especially Westerners, often ‘mistake’ butoh for dance therapy or as a modality to release emotions.

Finally, in relation to the tension between therapy or performance in butoh, Marie-Gabrielle Rotie, a London-based butoh-inspired dancer and solo manager of the non-profit organization *Butoh UK* (former *London Butoh Network*), maintains that

[t]here are two extremes of the spectrum and I think my line is butoh is a professional performance practice. It was never therapeutic practice, but that does not mean that it cannot be understood therapeutically. And obviously it is used therapeutically to great effect. But I think fundamentally it is a professional performance practice.

As for the impact that butoh has had in her life, she says:

I don’t have a faith, I am not religious at all, and I don’t adhere to any philosophical framework, but I suppose butoh is this sort of anchor. It’s

like somehow one anchor among many other anchors – I'd say feminism is another anchor, but butoh provides some sort of anchor for daily life in the sense that....It's always there?[I]t works like a sort of identity structure and there some sort of solidity in that sense as well, it gives a sense of coherence....

I have a completely different relation to aging because having seen Kazuo Ohno dancing age seventy-nine to ninety and knowing that it's not going to be horrific, you know, when I am sixty or something. I mean, for many dancers this is not a reality in their consciousness at all, and for many dancers you get to forty and you are finished, and now I am forty-three.

And I am kind of worried about the body aging and that kind of stuff, but [butoh] gives me a completely different perspective on age, and on death even.... (Rotie, personal communication).

Overall, professional butoh dancers tend to highlight the nature of butoh as a performance art, while the 'therapeutical' and 'spiritual' elements remain in the background. Amateur and semi-professional butoh dancers, on the other hand, may see the 'therapeutic' or 'spiritual' elements in butoh as balancing, or at times out-weighting, the 'artistic' ones.

I suggest that professional dancers may simply have acquired a more pragmatic attitude toward the dance as a consequence of having to make money out of it, whereas amateur or semi-professional dancers are more free to invest the dance with a wider spectrum of significances, by virtue of the fact that they are not economically committed to it: hence butoh can become a quasi-spiritual practice, a playful activity, a 'valve'⁴³ for releasing emotions, or all these things at once.

⁴³ 'Valve' was the actual word used by one of the informants.

6.5 Recapitulation and conclusion

In Chapter Five I argued that the combination of passive and active uses of the body in butoh, and the resulting dynamic tension between 'control' and 'loss of control,' lies at the core of butoh's aesthetic efficacy. Based on that discussion, I opened the present chapter with the suggestion that, despite notions of 'returning to the natural body,' butoh dance strongly relies on a component of 'method' or 'technique' (which I referred to as 'techniques of otherness'). I thus set out to investigate the nature of butoh as a 'technique of the body.'

My discussion in the first section of this chapter centred upon the relationship between dance and imagery, and on this basis I have proposed a theory of 'butoh imagery as sensory notation:' by way of sensory engagement, butoh dancers use images to, simultaneously, ground themselves with their bodies *and* become 'other than themselves.'

In the second section of this chapter I discussed the case of butoh imagery that is informed by a language of emotion. I identified the relevance of emotion-centred type of imagery to my theory of butoh images as sensory notation, in the fact that emotional states are intrinsically corporeal.

Meanwhile, an emotion-centred approach to imagery also revealed a therapeutic understanding of butoh dance, as shown in the example of *Orpheus*. We saw how some butoh dancers believe that butoh gives them 'tools' to deal with difficult emotional contents, i.e. by helping them 'release' those emotions.

While the relationship to 'emotion' appeared to be key to a Western understanding of butoh, i.e. as therapy and as art, I argued that the core of such a relationship is, once again, the dynamic tension between 'control' and 'loss of control.'

As a butoh dancer, who has strived to understand butoh from the point of view of an aesthetic and dance system, to me, 'emotion' in dance is instrumental to allowing the body to come forth. Yet, since the two dimensions of body and emotions are intertwined, one cannot really separate the one from the other. Thus, although my concern with butoh is primarily aesthetic, it is important to acknowledge that butoh can help in dealing with uncomfortable emotions, for instance, by helping cultivate a better disposition toward them, and to recognise the nature of emotions as grounded in the body.

PART II: BUTOH IN PERFORMANCE

While Part I was specifically concerned with describing the socio-sensory contents of butoh training, Part II addresses the socio-sensory contents of butoh in performance. In particular it asks the question: What happens to the sensorium of butoh dancers when moving from a context of training to one of performance?

Because the most obvious difference between these two situations is that the second involves the presence of an audience, the next two chapters explore the extent to which the co-presence of performers and audience is relevant to the constitution of the butoh body as an aesthetic and cultural object.

In Chapter Seven I examine the perceptual constitution of the butoh body in and through performance, and the processes by which such perceptual constitution may become a source of 'meaning.' In Chapter Eight I analyze the main characteristics of butoh dance performances understood as aesthetic and relational artifacts, and especially the aspect of 'aesthetic communication' as it unfolds between dancers and audiences.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7 'The world reflected in a drop of water:'

Body, meaning and the senses in performance-making

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the perceptual reconfiguring of the body through performance practice, by drawing on my experience of a performance workshop with butoh-influenced performer and director Yael Karavan, entitled 'The World Reflected in a Drop of Water.' I attended this workshop twice: first in 2009 in London, on my own, and then again in 2010 in Oxford, with *Café Reason*. This chapter combines data from both experiences.

The performance workshop with Karavan was different from any other butoh workshop I had been to before in that, during the training, each participant performed *solo* in front of an audience composed by the rest of the participants. Flipping between those two roles, of 'audience' and of 'solo performers,' workshop participants were put into the situation of unpacking the experience of performing in a way that was more analytically rich than if they were to just perform, or go and watch a performance. Thus, while being in a 'simulation' of performance, participants nevertheless performed and were exposed, as well as observed others perform.

Because of its strongly experimental character – as grounded in the physical and as mediated by performance-making strategies (that I will illustrate in the course of the discussion below) – this workshop provides a good case for analyzing the perceptual constitution of the butoh body as a performative object. In the discussion that follows, I will highlight some of the sensory

patterns that were at work in those performance situations, and direct attention to the sensory 'data' resulting from one's engagement with them. Also, I will examine the processes of semantic (dis-)articulation of the body through the practice of performance-making. In doing so, I will refer to Bourdieu's notion of the *hexis* (Bourdieu 1977), and to Turner's theory of liminality (Turner 1982).

This chapter refers closely to my discussion in Chapter Three on the modalities of 'radical participation' (Goulet and Granville Miller 2007) adopted in my research. I expand on that discussion by reporting one of the most 'transformative' and 'ecstatic' experiences of my fieldwork that took place during the workshop, which underlined the aesthetic importance of 'not understanding' and 'not knowing,' and so provided me with fresh new insights into butoh and performance work in general. I will be relying on Gell's theory of trance (1980) to detail my experiential ethnographic details.

Finally, to balance the consistent use of a first person, agent-centred account, which serves the conveying of those 'radically participatory' contents, in the last part of the chapter I will draw on the other participants' experiences and reflections of the workshop. Rappaport's understanding of the communicative power of gesture, posture and action as based on their 'materiality' (Rappaport 1999), and Turner's notion of 'communitas' (Turner 1969) will be of assistance in defining the anthropological significance of performance practice.

7.2 Between training and performance

7.2.1 'The world reflected in a drop of water'

Yael Karavan was born in Israel, but grew up in Florence, Paris and London. A cosmopolitan performer, she masters a variety of performance languages spanning dance to mime to physical theatre. Much of her work draws on *butoh*, which she has studied with prominent *butoh* masters: Kazuo Ohno, Carlotta Ikeda, Tadashi Endo, Yumiko Yoshioka, and Hijikata's widow Akiko Motofuji. When I first came across an advert about her two-day workshop in London, Yael's multi-faceted professional bio intrigued me. I decided to go, expecting nothing too different from what I had already experienced in the past. I was wrong: her workshop 'The World Reflected in a Drop of Water' was unlike any other *butoh*-related workshop I had attended in the past, to the point of making me question whether it was a *butoh* workshop at all.

Having had the opportunity to become familiar with Yael's work in the months following that workshop, I resolved that there are at least two good reasons for including an account of her work in this thesis. The first reason is that Yael's eclectic method is interspersed with notions and techniques that are typically associated with *butoh*, including 'presence,' 'metamorphosis,' and 'desocialisation of the body.' This provides an indication of how *butoh* is used not just as a self-contained dance philosophy, but alongside other genres, artistic languages and themes that make up the spectrum of contemporary performance work. The second reason is, more simply, that the group *Café Reason* came in contact – partly, through my introduction – with Yael, and it was influenced by her approach to *butoh* and performance making, as will be described in Chapter Eight. This aspect highlights the element of 'openness' and of 'permeability' that characterizes contemporary *butoh* identities, for dancers with different *butoh* backgrounds may still influence each other.

For the whole length of the workshop, the two dimensions of training and performing intersected and overlapped, drawing the participants in and out of the simulation of solo performances. The following section offers an example of the transition from warming-up to solo performance during the first day of training, and thus provides an illustration of a ‘sensory shift’ (Stroeken 2008) from butoh ‘training’ to butoh ‘performance.’

7.2.2 A warm-up: connecting with each other and the space

Yael walks in the middle of the space, smiling. She thanks us for deciding to come to the workshop rather than enjoying the beautiful weather outside, and she summons us in the centre of the main space. We begin a warm up by just walking around the space at our ‘normal pace of walking.’ Yael, who is moving around the space with the rest of us, asks us to pay attention to the way our feet touch the ground: *‘Just really feel how you are putting your foot on the ground. Feel the connection between the foot and the ground.’*⁴⁴ As we walk, paying attention to our feet, we are also asked to look at each other’s eyes: *‘Receive and give just through your eyes. These are the people you are going to work with for these two days.’* As we begin acknowledging each other through our eyes, spontaneous smiles also begin appearing on our faces. Yael asks us not to walk in circles, but changing direction from time to time: *‘Every time I clap my hands you change your direction while walking. [CLAP] Change direction! [CLAP] Change direction!’* While shifting trajectory in space at each clap, we still search for each other’s eyes and faces, as well as paying attention to the sensation of the ground with our feet.

⁴⁴ Yael gave me permission to audio-record the workshop. All direct quotes in italics are verbatim transcriptions of her speech during the workshop.

Consistent with my previous analysis of training situations, Yael's instructions affect the proxemic patterns of the participants, their awareness of the environment, and of the physical others. For example, in searching for a connection with the ground, we direct our attention to the sense of touch as located in the soles of our feet. In relating to and acknowledging other participants, we use our eyesight; we also smile to each other, activating our face muscles. Finally, in suddenly shifting direction in space, we activate our vestibular sensory system – pertaining to the sense of motion, balance, speed, and space orientation.

7.2.3 An interview: re-configuring sensory and proxemic patterns

Yael, who in the meantime has kept moving around with the rest of group, suddenly walks among us, spreads her arms out, and pushes most of the group towards one side of the room, leaving only one person in the centre: *'All of you come here.... You stay there.'* Most of the group now stands beside Yael, with the attention now drawn to the person standing in the centre. Among the participants, nervousness becomes palpable as we think, 'that person could have been any of us'. With a mixture of insistence and delicacy, child-like curiosity⁴⁵ and a reassuring smile, Yael interviews the person in the middle. The latter, in answering her questions, should try and address the entire group: *'If you can, when you answer, answer to all of us, even though I will be the one who does most of the talking.'*

In most butoh workshops I have attended in the past, at the very beginning

⁴⁵ I associate the 'child-like' trait in Yael to her understanding that performance work always entails a component of 'playfulness.' In her workshop, participants were encouraged not to take themselves too seriously, but experiment with both their strengths and their weaknesses.

everybody is gathered in a circle, and each participant briefly introduces him or herself before the practice. As a participant at a butoh workshop, one goes through a series of exercises, some of which may require a strong physical and mental focus. There is no judgment of how well one is doing because 'there is no good or bad in butoh' or 'we are all learning.'⁴⁶ On those occasions, the individual participant is not as important as being together in the same place, dancing. Still, the training experience is something intensely personal, with each participant being responsible for getting the most out of the practice.

With Yael, though, it soon becomes clear that the self-introduction is integral to the practice of performance. It is, in Yael's words, our 'first solo.' When I understand that I have embarked on something significantly different from my previous butoh experiences, I start feeling stressed, particularly when I hear Yael asking the following questions to the interviewee: '*What is your favorite music? Could you sing a song for us? Can you do a piece of dance?*' I certainly did not expect to be asked to sing a song or dance for a bunch of people. While trying to keep calm, I notice how Yael empathizes with the interviewee. It looks like she is scanning each person's physical attitude and behavior. She tries to make the person at ease, each and every time asking the person to relax, to lower his or her shoulders, to take one or more deep breaths. At the same time she demands 'presence.' She asks the person to raise their voice so that everybody in the group can hear him or her, and to use his or her eyes to address the entire group, as though the latter were 'a unique organism.' After breaking down some of the interviewee's various resistances, she encourages the person to offer a piece of dance, or to sing a song. She is not satisfied with a short answer; if you do not give her enough she will ask for something more. Each interview lasts about ten minutes. In

⁴⁶ I have heard more than one teacher pronounce such phrases in the course of butoh workshops.

between one interview and another, the group breaks up into the space, moving around and continuing warming up guided by Yael. Now it has become clear that, one by one, we all end up in the middle doing our ‘first solo.’ She warns us: *‘One thing is not allowed – Just walk in the space – It’s not allowed to think “Oh! What am I gonna say? Oh! Which song?”’*

Without going into the details of the interviews, I suggest that the new proxemic configuration, with the ‘audience’ standing to one side and the ‘performer’ standing in the middle, determines a new sensory shift. Between performer and audience there is a ten-foot gap, more or less. The distance allows the audience a unique outlook on the performer, with optical vision⁴⁷ and hearing as privileged modes of sensory attention. On the other hand, the performer is asked to focus on his or her posture, relax their shoulders (as they tend to appear tense), and breath in and out. At the same time the performer is asked not to disconnect from the audience, but to use his or her eyes and voice to hold the audience’s attention. Thus, the performer’s sensory awareness is distributed, at once, inwards – proprioceptively – and towards the audience – exteroceptively.

I argue that the two main social roles, of a performer and of a member of the audience, intertwine with the aspects of physical distance and of sensory engagement that stems from such distance. In other words, the ‘space’ that Yael intentionally interposed between participants also determines a distinction of ‘roles,’ separating the indiscriminate ‘whole’ of participants into two parts of a social relation. Meanwhile, the new physical configuration

⁴⁷ Elsewhere in this thesis (i.e. Chapter Five, Six and Eight), I distinguish between ‘optical’ and ‘haptic’ vision. The difference between the two can be understood as one in perspective: whereas optical vision distances and objectifies, haptic vision is close-up, to the point that it approximates the sensation of touch (Ingold 2011, p. 133-134).

affects the participants' patterns of sensory engagement. For instance, when my turn came up, I remember that the simple fact of standing alone in the centre, and being watched, gave me the impression of being surrounded by an enormous space. The gap between me and my audience seemed to swallow up every single gesture I did, or word I uttered. Due to the changed configuration of my environment, I had to raise my voice, which in turn affected the perception of my own physical presence. Having to 'recalibrate' my utterances in order to be able to relate with the 'other side,' I had the impression that I had stepped into a different role, and a different self.

In the next section, I will expand on the notion that performance practice involves an element of 'transformation.' I will do so by examining the altering of sensory awareness that I experienced during the workshop.

7.3 'Otherness' in the body

For what else *is* the divinity but a certain trembling, a certain vertiginous intoxication?

Gell (1980, p. 238, emphasis in the original)

7.3.1 Blindfolded: a practice in 'transformation'

In the early morning of the second day of the workshop, all eleven of us participants are blindfolded. For the next fifty minutes we are to wander in the space of the studio in total darkness. Yael's voice is our only guide: '*You are absolutely free and I will take care that you don't have an accident,*' she reassures us. She does not give us any detailed instructions, however, only a few hints:

There are many elements you can play with, like direction in your body, images of the space where you are. Try really to not just be swimming inside these states, but use images that arrive to you naturally from somewhere, a memory or a place where you want to be.

She says that we do not need to be moving at all times. When dealing with an image, for instance, we can simply notice how the image feels to us. As we begin walking around in darkness, there is not much I feel like doing. I notice I feel disoriented. The same space that up to one minute earlier was familiar, with its white walls, large windows onto a clear sky, and wooden floor, has turned into an obscure cavity with unsure boundaries. Yet, the presence of the space is even more overwhelming – or is it me, whose perception has changed? – I am not quite sure what to do or how to move. I recall Yael talking about images coming from memory or somewhere, so I try to focus on my thoughts. My attention shifts inwards, in search of an image to relate to.

As images come and go through my mind, I cannot linger on any of them in particular. The blindfold promotes, at once, a sense of isolation – a shift onto oneself – and of vulnerability – of being exposed to an unknown environment. By relying on senses other than vision, I feel the presence of other people around me: I hear the noises they make as they move, their breathing, the creaking of the wooden floor under their feet.

Yael's voice breaks in:

Try to change the space around you, when you move and when you dance. Try to maybe change rhythm, the atmosphere of the images that you contain in your body.

I find her phrase, '*change the space around you*' very intriguing. How am I supposed to change the space if I cannot see anything? I look for answers

to this question through my body. I turn my attention to the environment I cannot see. This brings a new kind of thinking: How does it feel to be in space? Or, maybe, does the space feel me?

Yael encourages us to explore different positions – *‘You can use the floor, you can use standing...’* – I follow her instructions by entering in dynamic relationship with the physical environment: a different way to place the body, a different angle or location. I shift from standing to crawling, from crawling to sitting. Different parts of my body are in contact with the floor. How does this affect me? At all times, music is playing in the background. Yael asks us to avoid letting the rhythm or melody control us. Or rather, instead of following the music, we should try and relate to it in different ways: *‘Sometimes you can go against it, sometimes you can swim in it, but use it not as something you have to move with at all times.’*

After about ten minutes of this, Yael introduces a new formula:

Make clear for yourself WHERE you are, WHO you are, and WHAT you are doing. Even if it's an abstract place make it clear for yourself where you are: outside, inside; smells, textures. Make clear for yourself who you are. Are you you? Are you body? Are you an object? Are you an element? Are you an abstraction or an idea? ...Make it clear what you are doing or what you want to do. So, where you are, who you are, and what you are doing, even if it's abstract, just for you it is clear. Don't lose the where, who, and what. Try to go deeper into it.

The instruction is difficult because it engages three different aspects (where, who, what) at once. Not sure where to start from, I hold onto the music background – electronic and mechanical noises, reminding me of an industrial setting – Where am I? I visualize a desert landscape covered in waste. What am I? I must come from another planet; I just landed here, but I do not

remember how or why. I am wary of my surroundings, and I mostly rely on my sense of hearing. I am on the alert, for I perceive the presence of unidentified others around me as potential danger. What am I looking for? I am looking for something familiar that could reconcile me with these mysterious surroundings.

Things get even more complicated when Yael asks us to change the who-where-what into something new:

When I clap my hands, I want you to change completely into something that is the opposite of what you are doing now. As if you are jumping into another reality [CLAP] – Try something new, different, new.

The noise background intensifies, taking over every other sound. I am stuck again. It took me a while to get into the image of the alien fumbling about the desert wasteland and now I have to turn into something else. I quickly make something up of an opposite quality. I have got it: this time it is not physical, but immaterial. I am a ghost, a ghost made of light. Slowly, but surely, I cross the space, using my feet to take my body upwards, away from the floor, at the same time trying to avoid swinging up and down, or side-to-side. I make sure there is a constant gap between my heels and the floor as I step, so as to create an appearance of lightness (a technique I learnt from my butoh teacher Sayoko Onishi).

Before I get the time to relax into this new image, however, Yael claps her hands once again:

Change again! Try and change your rhythm, your being, your space around you, everything! Throw your body in a new picture!

This is tough. I am blindfolded, drifting around inside a soundscape of noises,

creaking, breaths, and stamping feet, and I start feeling rather helpless. At this point, I have nothing to do but let my present psychological condition play the game that Yael wants me to play: I let myself wander around in semi-despair, not knowing what I am, where I am, or what I am looking for. The background noise gets louder and louder. Now, the voice is yelling: '*Change again! New, new!*' No matter how much effort I put into generating a new who-where-what, changing movement quality, persona and scenario, from one minute to the next, Yael's hands clap and her voice pursues us: '*Change again!*'

I realise that, while strongly involved in picturing ever-new scenarios in my head, I am not equally engaged physically. There is a gap between my mind generating images and my body relating to those images. Caught in loop of mental images and not being able to carry those images into my body, I soon begin to find this whole thing absurd and frustrating. Yael gives us no way out.

*Change again! Change again! Throw yourself into something else.
Change again! Change rhythm and atmosphere! Different relation of
your body to the space! Change the relation of your body! Change
again!*

I realise that Yael's words are also throwing other people into a state of chaos. Now someone is running around at the edges of the studio – What if they bump into someone? Yet the voice keeps demanding: '*Change again! Surprise yourself! Someone or something that you haven't been yet!*' As she says so, the background changes into a lighter, melody-like, soundscape.

*Like in a dream anything is possible. You can be what you want; you
can be where you want. Let your body exist. Change again. Try to find
something new: the attitude of your body, the relation with the space and
the rhythm.*

The word 'change' now feels like it undermines the very possibility of making choices. Yael first introduced the exercise saying that we were '*completely free*.' However, this now sounds like an absurdity to me, as I realize the extent to which my physical body holds my imagination back. Blindfolded, I feel her gaze on me at all times. While feeling compelled to respond to her, to find an answer to her enigmas, I feel constrained, claustrophobic in my own skin.

Change again! Try uncomfortable decisions. Don't let yourself be comfortable. Try to find something new to come out.

She speeds up. Now she asks us to change not every five minutes, but every two, then every single minute. I am too slow, and I have no idea what to do.

Change again! Try not to repeat yourself! So many possibilities in your body, so many landscapes, so many colours, so many elements!

Her clapping becomes more and more frequent; her voice gives us no pause, yet retains her encouraging power: *Change again!* The background is filled with distorted sounds, contributing to my deepening sense of loss and displacement. At the point that I have become exhausted and frustrated, I get a glimpse of something qualitatively different. Yael is still somewhere in the room. Whenever I hear the sound of her voice I know it is time for another change. This time, however, she tells us to continue on our own:

And continue on your own. So, change for yourself. Don't stay too long. Try really to constantly change, with yourself and in your own rhythm. Take it from the moment. Just change in your body.

At this point I notice that I have internalised her prompt to ‘*Change!*’ No longer do I pause to ponder what to do, for I am too tired to even think. Instead, my movements seem to emerge as though they are led by an independent will. One of my elbows pulls the rest of my body in one direction, and then swoops towards the ground. The other elbow takes the lead, this time pulling upwards towards the ceiling; a spin follows, which brings my body out of balance. As if ‘watching from the outside,’ I see my body lingering, for a fraction of second, between balance and unbalance; gravity prevails and I fall down but arms are quick enough to catch the rest of my body, preventing it from landing badly on the floor – nevertheless happening with a thump. At that point, my weight draws the rest of my body into a squatting position, and finally, my feet press against the floor to push the weight of the pelvis up and, through the uncurling of the spine, to a standing position. In this condition of constant, seemingly random mutation, I do not decide what to do consciously. Instead, it is a feeling of kinetic energy riding my limbs, muscles and articulations, leading one movement into the next. As the kinetic flow takes me through territories of physical behavior I cannot foresee, I experience different qualities, rhythms, and energies of movement. In this state of rapture, all of a sudden, I laugh out of exhaustion. I hear my own laughter resounding into my ears: fresh, lively and unbound. Laughing is movement coming from the inside.

I find myself finally relating to Yael’s words effortlessly:

And suddenly change, for yourself. Without thinking, just move your body somewhere new.

Change suddenly the position of your body. Don't think, just... Ah!
[There it is]

And change...Something new...

Yael asks us to find an ending, each one in our own time, to finally come and

sit on the ground. She then comes around, hands each one of us a pen and a sheet of paper, and ask us to draw ourselves: '*Preferably your body, your being, the way you wish.*'

Still blindfolded, with a crayon of wax in my right hand, I fumble about in search of the sheet in front of me. My fingers slide over its smooth surface. I search for its upper corners and hold it with my left hand so that it won't slip away as I draw. I lean forward to be more in control. I draw my body. I cannot see what my drawing looks like. But I try to *listen* to the traces left by the crayon over the sheet, to pay attention to the friction, the sound it makes. This way, I have a sense of what I am doing. The pressure, sound and smell of the crayon remind me of when I was a child. This thought brings me back to a comfort zone, a space of innocence, where there is no expectation, but only exploration and play. My only effort is to try and locate, more or less appropriately, the shape of the body, the position of head and face, the trunk, legs and feet, arms and hands. When I decide that the drawing is more or less finished, I leave the crayon on the floor and wait. After the last person is done, Yael picks all the drawings. Finally, we are allowed to take off our blindfolds.

7.3.2 Sharing experiences of the exercise

Yael asks us to describe how we felt during the exercise. Most people define it as 'frustrating,' 'challenging' and 'tiring,' particularly towards the end. Some people say they enjoyed it; others found it 'interesting.' Some people emphasize that time seemed very long, and how difficult it was to feel comfortable, as we had to constantly change. Someone remarks that they got 'annoyed with the whole thing.' Four people – among whom I count myself – felt that they were too slow in reacting to change, and as if they were limited by their body. Andrew, [pseud.], who previously introduced himself as a

professional solo performer, says: 'I felt physically bounded, wanted to interact with the space but couldn't because there were too many people around. I had the feeling of being stuck.' Someone asks why we had to be blindfolded. Yael answers:

[Having your eyes closed] changes your reality, because we are used to seeing and communicating through our eyes. When you close your eyes you enter a state that is more inside you, you see all the things that are inside you. We have so many memories and so many things inside, so many things that we experienced, and so much imagination. A lot of it is in our body, but we tend to look for things outside of us.

So...Sometimes we are still too far, so... 'Change'! But then, I am here and... What can I do? [She touches her chin with two fingers] I do this! [Indicating that she is still touching her chin with two fingers]

But then...I've got to do something else. What do I do next? I am doing this [she is arranging her trousers] and my body is here, rearranging the trousers... And maybe this will lead to something else...

So I don't always use my mind, or something that I am used to. But I actually use this [each and every movement].

This way I find myself in places that I am not used to.

Her reflections extend now to performance work in general:

What we do [as performers] is a live thing [sic], is a live performance, it's a live art, and this is why we must be at all times aware of this aliveness of things that are around us... Like...'Oh! I feel really hot' [she waves her hands around her face] Why not to use this heat, and this will take me to something else...

Tomorrow we'll have more time to really try to break it into little pieces: the way we think, the way of behaving, trying to find the gaps that are in between these unknown spaces where the unconscious can get into. ... Just 'Change Change Change'; we work with words and how to break our patterns and just this thing of 'change change change'... Suddenly (AHHHHH!) this openness, where I am really free and I am not just inside the fear of 'what will I do?' or 'what am I thinking?' I am not a prisoner of myself anymore...

There are so many elements that you can use, outside, inside.

These things that are inside us... We are our own material. We can create music with our body, with our movement, with our emotional space, we can create colors, atmospheres, we can create space just with our imagination, and it's something that emanates, that really changes reality.

It's really difficult. It's our body and it's fragile, but it is wonderful to find inside these walls the different tools and elements that can be used and.... It is infinite.

And sometimes, somehow, we are into our pattern and that is also good, this is our color, our main stream, but we can also, inside this, play another tune or try to put on another color.... And suddenly this is it: surprise!

7.3.3 Some preliminary observations

In the previous section I gave an account of my personal experience of the exercise with the blindfold, on the assumption – which is emphasized methodologically throughout the thesis – that my position as a participant could assist me in understanding what other butoh dancers might have gone through as well. This perspective is coherent with the fact that, for nearly an hour, all of us participants were exposed to the same auditory stimuli and vocal instructions, which seemed designed to destabilise the ways in which we are accustomed to inhabit the world, hence disorientating us, while pushing the ‘boundaries’ of our perception. In particular, I suggested that the use of the blindfold created in the participants a sense of isolation as well as self-reliance: the first by annihilating vision, the second by stimulating other modes of sensory attention. Among the senses compensating for the lack of vision, the aural sense covered an important role in orientation – as in hearing other people moving, or in picking up vocal instructions – while kinesthesia, or sense of movement, was crucial not only to orientation but also to ‘transformation.’

As Yael herself suggested, the blindfold encouraged a proprioceptive mode of attention: *‘When you close your eyes you enter into a state that is more inside you, you see all the things that are inside you (...) but we tend to look for things outside of us.’* Her prompt to ‘Change!’ and related exhortations to ‘throw oneself in a new picture,’ and ‘become something else, something new,’ can be also seen as entailing an ‘imaginative consciousness’ of one’s moving body as grounded in tactility-kinesthesia (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p.115). Meanwhile, in the exercise with the blindfold, participants could effectively ‘change’ from one state of ‘being’ into another through – tactile-kinesthetic – perception of relative ‘difference’ (Bateson 1979, pp. 94-100) in one’s own motility, movement quality, and energy, as well as in relation to their environment.

In the next section, I wish to give further consistency to my argument that 'change' in the exercise with the blindfold had a tactile-kinesthetic basis. In order to do this, I will review Alfred Gell's 'vestibular theory' of trance among the Muria of Central India (1980), and propose the relevance of this theory to the analysis of the experience of the exercise with the blindfold.

7.3.4 The body as 'Other:' reflections on the exercise with the blindfold

Gell (1980) set the foundation for what he describes as a 'neuropsychological'⁴⁸ study of trance, possession and allied behavior through the case study of ritual swinging in Muria religion. Drawing on Mauss' famous essay on 'body techniques' (Mauss 1979), Gell addresses the voluntary induction of altered states of awareness through mediums. He refers to the peculiar use of dance among the Muria as one of the techniques for inducing altered psychophysical states – he calls it 'a technology of altered states of consciousness' (ibidem, p. 223).

In the case of dance, Muria divinity would reveal itself as a kinetic force taking over the medium's normal sense of self-possession (ibidem, pp. 225-226). This observation leads Gell to consider that, among the Muria, divinity might not be an abstract, intellectually created idea, but a 'tangible physical quantity perceived somaesthetically' and 'a force acting directly on and through the body' (ibidem, p. 225).

⁴⁸ The qualification of Gell's study as 'neuropsychological' lies in Gell's focus on the 'biological' foundations of trance and religious behaviour. That is, trance and other religious behaviour would be grounded in an altering of the vestibular apparatus and the equilibrium sense through appropriate 'techniques of altered states of consciousness.'

In a similar vein, Gell (1980) explains how a swing can become, among the Muria, a vehicle for religious awareness. He uses his vestibular theory of trance induction to explain how mediums 'become God' via ritual swinging: 'vertigo threatens intentionality, and the structures of intentionality underlie our sense of "self"' (ibidem, p. 226). Specifically, it is the 'assault on the equilibrium sense' that, according to Gell, determines a 're-structuring of the self/world relationship' (p. 242) that is ultimately interpreted by the Muria as the presence of the God: 'Where there arises the "gap" between intention and experience, a dislocation of input-output relations in consciousness, we are in the presence of divinity in its raw state' (ibidem, p. 238).

The state of exhilaration that a medium achieves when 'riding' the ritual swing is not unlike play in that, during play, behavioral contents are abstracted from the routine contexts in which they normally take place, and pursued for their own sake. Drawing from Caillois's theory of play (Caillois 1961), Gell suggests that ordinary, everyday behavior acquires new significances when turned into play.

Characteristic of play... is the way it raises to the level of explicitness the performance of behavioural routines which are, or will become, subliminal. It is activity engaged in for its own sake, and it always takes place within a frame which isolates it from the context of action performed with an ulterior end in view. Play is abstracted from the stream of ongoing activities, and within the play-frame particular activities are abstracted from their routine contexts and are focused on and so to speak 'savoured' (Gell 1980, p. 232).

Gell argues that the 'abstraction of behavioral contents' from their routine contexts determines an 'intensification' of the behavioral contents themselves, by means of a process called 'deautomatization' (ibidem, p. 232). The notion

of 'deautomatization,' coined by Deikman (1966, quoted in Gell, *ibidem*, p. 239), refers to the cognitive process by which a subject, by focusing on 'actions' and 'percepts' that he usually carries on unconsciously, accesses heightened states of awareness. This mode of attention can take place not only in the course of passive or still meditation, but also through active techniques such as dance (*ibidem*). In Gell's words, the individual involved in a process of deautomatization 'is not simply aware of his world, but he is aware of his awareness, of what is involved in terms of mental processes' (Gell, *ibidem*).

Ness (1992) offers us an example of a deautomatization when she describes to non-dancers what performing choreographed movement can mean. She reports on repeating an arm movement until she loses awareness of the 'I' of everyday life and becomes 'an exotic mind composed by a limb's neuromusculature intelligence, a mind exploring its environment through something other than its eyes and ears' (1992, p. 5). If we were to imagine 'meaning' or 'content' from the point of view of an arm's mind, so to speak, we could recognise the degree in which such meaning or content would correspond to the kinesthetically perceived stretching or contracting of muscles, or the sense of kinetic energy arising from the dynamic tension between the pull of gravity and the intention to move. While Ness describes this process as one of 'becoming her arm,' Gell, in his analysis of Muria trances, suggests that a medium in a state of rapture perceives his movements as though these were not his own: '.... the medium 'carries' his body – his head and upper limbs particularly – as if they were foreign objects, either unnaturally heavy, or once they have started trembling, as if they were endowed with a life of their own. The medium is also seen frequently to watch his shaking or outstretched hands as if following their movements from afar' (*ibidem*, p. 236). Whereas, as a first impression, it might seem that those two experiences are very different – 'becoming one's own arm' as opposed to 'watching one's own shaking hand from afar' – I argue that the core of these

two experiences is the same: in both cases, the person's prevailing impression is one of being 'other' within his or her own body. Also, in both cases, kinesthesia can be seen as prevailing over other senses.

I believe both Gell's and Ness' theories enlighten our understanding of the exercise with the blindfold. At one point in my account, for instance, I claimed that I was no longer performing my own movements consciously or intentionally. A combination of fatigue, frustration and stress by overstimulation, mainly induced by having to constantly 'change' for an extended period of time, led me to experience myself in unusual ways. Like Ness (1992), I lost awareness of my everyday 'I,' and had a clear feeling of kinetic energy encompassing my limbs, muscles and articulations. The 'movement' content to every gesture, even the smallest one, became so explicit that any action, indeed my very physical presence, felt imbued with new vigor, as though coming into being for the first time. This intensification of the perceptual dimension of action is consistent with Gell's description of 'deautomatization' as taking place in trance, dance and meditation. Yael herself suggested, in the feedback session, that the exploration with the blindfold was meant to bring unconscious movement to a state of 'aliveness.' Even those actions that are commonly perceived as insignificant – rearranging one's trousers, bringing one's fingers onto the chin, sneezing, blowing one's nose, etc. – could be abstracted from the domain of ordinary behavior, and become 'source material' for performance.

7.3.5 Body *hexis* and liminality

In the previous section, I described an experience of 'transformation' induced by a sensory shift into a tactile-kinesthetic mode of attention. Thus, by now, it should be clear that when I talk of 'transformation,' I refer more to a shift in perception than an actual physical metamorphosis. Yet, the boundary

between the two wears thin if we consider that a shift in perception can affect the ways one is accustomed to inhabiting the world, that is, through active bodily engagement.

The notion of body *hexis* (Bourdieu 1977, pp. 82-87) corresponds to the system of bodily dispositions that make up the social *habitus* (Mauss 1979). As such, body *hexis* not only refers to the 'modus operandi' that mediates one's engagement with the world, for instance in the carrying out of everyday tasks through characteristic postures or gestures (Bourdieu 1977, p. 87). It also marks one's position within the 'objective structure of the relations between social conditions' (ibidem, p. 82).

If body *hexis* is indexical of one's position in a pre-existing and enduring structure of social relations, then a transfiguration or shift in body *hexis* could be perceived as a deviation from such enduring system of relations. Thus, for instance, anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff (1992) observe that a deviated body *hexis* is characteristic of liminal subjects.

Systematic shifts in the positioning of the body serve to index shifts in social location. The assumption of horizontal rather than vertical posture often accompanies a state of affliction and liminality; similarly, the raising and lowering of the body in relation to the normal planes of activity tend to imply super- or sub-social being. Authority is thus often shown by physical elevation, whereas birth and death in many societies take place on the ground.... Furthermore, movement that differs markedly from ordinary locomotion both signals and actually achieves deviation from routine states of being. The ecstatic, drunk, or mad proclaim their state in their gait. And swinging or circling, with their attendant physiological effect on balance and perception, frequently announce conditions of dissociation or "inspiration" – that is, the eclipse of everyday existence through transporting experience (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, p. 77).

Hence, a change in the moving body's hexis can affect not only the way we perceive but also the way others perceive us. This notion supports the argument, which I outlined in Chapter Two, that the butoh body is 'other' because of its 'indeterminate' configurations, which undermines 'normative' behavior. To the extent that it welcomes the disruption of normative versions of body hexis as individual, self-contained and self-posessed, the butoh dancer's body can be considered liminal.

Whereas the disruption of body hexis in Muria ecstatic dances is interpreted as an intervention or presence of the God, in a Western secular society we are more prone to talk of the dancer's or performer's talent and skills. Yet, as we have seen, even a Western butoh dancer would not hesitate to talk of the 'mysterious,' the 'unknown,' the 'numinous' or, alternatively, of repressed emotional or animal/instinctual contents, trapped inside his or her body. Dance, within the context of butoh, is personified as an anonymous, multifaceted, and all-encompassing force, which emancipates the human body from 'civilisation' (Hijikata 2000, pp. 43-48).

In the following section, I shall illustrate how, in the final stage of Yael's workshop, we used words in combination with movement to explore alternative dimensions of meaning. This exploration is relevant in examining how butoh dancing undermines ordinary semantics to generate new significances.

7.4 Word, body, and meaning

Habit has its abode neither in thought nor in the objective body, but in the body as a mediator of a world.

Merleau-Ponty (1981 [1962], p. 145)

7.4.1 The assault on body *hexis* and the dislocation of meaning

The last part of the workshop consists of each participant creating a 'self portrait' solo piece to be performed in front of the rest of the group. Yael adopts the following strategy to make us retrieve source material for our solos.

1) Each participant writes on a sheet of paper his or her life story in seven to twelve sentences; 2) all participants get into pairs, exchange sheets of paper and read each other's life story; 3) each member of the pair tells the other the story behind each sentence they wrote; and 4) each participant chooses seven words out of his or her partner's sentences by circling or highlighting them, without their partner knowing which words he or she has chosen.

In turns, one of the two, whom I shall call the dancer, goes in the middle of the stage, while the other, whom I shall call the reader, stays at the margins of the stage. The reader recites, one by one, the words that he or she had circled from the dancer's life story, and waits for the dancer to respond to that word. The dancer translates each word into a movement, a gesture, or an action. Once all seven words have been translated into movement, the reader and the dancer go through all the words and related movements over and over again, with the reader shuffling the order of the words so as to change the sequence of the movements.

On this occasion I was given the following 'score' of words, based on my 'self portrait:' mother, flying, dancing, love, brothers, sunlight, and tree. Each of these words, abstracted from the original context of the sentence, translates into a mental image, an emotion, or a sense impression, which in turn I had to translate into movement. For instance, I remember envisioning the word 'mother' as a woman holding a baby in her arms and gently rocking her. I enacted the image the way I pictured it in my mind's eye. Additional qualities of affection, warmth and protection were somaesthetically brought into the action to convey the idea of 'mother' to the audience. Otherwise put, all these elements were combined together to make my body hexis indexical for 'mother.'

When the seven words-movement-forms seem to have consolidated, Yael gives the dancers new words,⁴⁹ reading them aloud, in order to infuse an extra quality to the dancer's existing movement vocabulary. For instance, the initial movement-form for 'mother' is infused with an additional quality this time given by the word, 'blowing instrument.' Whereas the body-index for 'mother' is retained via the movement of rocking an invisible baby in my arms, and via somaesthetic qualities of warmth, affection and protection, the new word 'blowing instrument', disrupts the integrity of the original body-index by bringing in a new, unexpected quality: now, the 'mother' rocks an invisible baby that, in the meanwhile, has turned into a saxophone; alternatively, 'mother' turns into a 'blowing instrument' herself, by blowing air out of her mouth and emitting strange sounds.

In the very last stage of the exercise, Yael asks the dancer to continue on his or her own, juggling with all the different movements and qualities that all the various words had evoked in his or her body. As one can guess, the final performances, which lasted from three to five minutes, ranged from the

⁴⁹ The new words that Yael reads had been made up in a previous exercise.

grotesque to the surreal. The words-movements-forms transfigured the dancer's body hexis by altering all parameters of 'normal' behavior, and generated ever-new, unexpected associations, as in Turner's account of liminality, where '[n]ovelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements' (Turner 1982, p. 27).

In this extract from an email sent to Yael after the workshop, workshop participant Bruno, from France, offers his reflections on the final solo exercise and outlines the significance that the exercise had for him.

Dear Yael,

...

In life the relationship to language is something which cannot be bypassed.

To me, the work you do doesn't deny the place of language and accepts it with all its many powers, including the tendency towards stagnation (to name something is to freeze it, and memory in the form of (hi)story has a fixed-ness which belongs to a completely different realm from the chunks of life when they were taking place). By your interplay of tying and untying, you reconstitute [sic] to the language of the (hi)stories of the participants not only the power of holding fixed but, crucially, the power to articulate.

It is for me a great inspiration:

the method I have recently developed to improvise as a solo musician is to make lists of things – instructions belonging to different registers: for example, 'address oneself to Mum as though she was alive,' 'play C# and D together,' 'fill the place behind me with sound,' 'not have any rules,' etc... And to try to look after all this at the same time – which is of course impossible: only one or two elements are sounding at the same

time, the others continue their story silently, and the articulations come from the passage of one to the other, and the shading of one by the other.

So there is a link with the work you have asked us to do, and probably the desire I have to persist in that particular path must have an autobiographical dimension to it.

But what I think I have learnt today, is that the (hi)stories are already there, whether one likes it or not, and the articulation (not necessarily narrative or chronological) brings them back into the realm of life: moving bodies, sounds, new (hi)stories....

And it was fascinating and moving to witness in the participants' performances which word brought out a posture and which word brought out a gesture, and also the fragility of the passages in between...

So forgive my many words around simple things.

To Bruno, the 'power' of language lies in the relationship between words and the body, a relationship that Yael's work brings to the fore. For instance, in the solo performances, the enacting of words temporarily restored the connection between words and experience, as the words were backed by the actual memories of the performers, as written down in a few sentences summarizing their life stories. That is, the words were imbued with personal significances, and such significances were sought in, and articulated through the body itself.

In the next section I will turn to some of the other participants' reflections on the workshop, to discover the impact that it had on them.

7.4.2 Emotion, metaphor, and communitas

Communitas is a state of mind as well as of society.

Rappaport (1999, p. 219)

I opened this chapter by arguing that performance work may lead to the experience of altered states of awareness. To prove this point I described some of the exercises in which we engaged during Yael's workshop, and the sensory shifts that they involved. I associated such altered states of sensory awareness to those pursued in ritual. I am now going to elaborate on this point and on its relevance to my current discussion.

As research on the nature of ritual consciousness suggests (Rappaport 1999, pp. 226–230; Turner 1988, pp. 156–177) the features of ritual performances induce a change in brain activity:

In essence, ritual techniques neutralize ... the functioning of the analytic conceptual mode, bringing to the fore developmentally earlier functioning.... This mode associates aspects of experience transductively; that is, makes lateral associations ... based upon similarity, overlapping class membership, or emotional affinity. This mode is more participatory and less decentered than is conceptual thought and consists of images embedded in fields of affect rather than concepts embedded in fields of logical relationships (Laughing, McManus and d'Aquili, in Rappaport 1999, p. 227).

Seen from this perspective, the process of translating words into movement in the last solo-performances might have led to a change in brain activity, and particularly from the operational processes that are involved in speech, linear analytic thought, and sense of duration, to those that are involved in 'spatial and tonal perception, pattern recognition, including those constituting emotion

and other states in internal milieu, and holistic and synthetic comprehension' (ibidem, p. 228). In the latter processes, 'metaphoric representation, primarily process thought, and strong emotion, [would] become increasingly important as the domination of syntactic, or syllogistic logic, or simple everyday rationality, recedes' (ibidem, p. 219). The effect would not be limited to brain function but involve the coordination of the entire nervous system (ibidem, p. 228).

Particularly in the final solos, as words were translated from the verbal and conceptual into the physical or embodied, participants might have accessed 'meanings' that bypassed analytical thought. For Rappaport (1999), acts and gestures that are performed in ritual draw their significance from the 'materiality' of the body that enacts them. The communicative character of a gesture, posture or action materialises ritual words into something physical, thus endowing a message with a quality of substance: 'Physical display is "performatively stronger" or "performatively more complete" than utterances.... The effect achieved is not only conventional but material' (Rappaport, ibidem, p. 143). Whether in ritual or in performance, the power of the performative relies in its materiality.

The words... alone, although audible, might well seem to be ephemeral, or to be separate or separable from the speaker – something distinct from himself. In contrast, a movement or posture is directly and immediately sensible to the performer as something inseparable from his being... Such physical acts seem to be more than "mere talk." It is the visible, present, living substance – bone, blood, gut and muscle – that is being "put on the line" (Rappaport, ibidem, p. 146).

I would like to make some final remarks with regard to the intrinsic social significance of the practices that I have discussed so far. The sharing of intense emotional experiences generates a sense of intimacy, or communion, corresponding to that 'state of mind and of society' that Victor Turner called

communitas (Rappaport 1999, pp. 216-229). The establishment of 'communitas' among individuals who took part in the performance workshop corresponds to an experiential dimension that encompasses both the intimate and the social. The sharing of meanings that are intensely felt, as drawn from personal experience and displayed onto and through the participants' bodies, is integral to the experience of performing and to its social significance. This can be glimpsed in the emails participants shared in the days following the workshop.

Flavia, from Brazil, writes:

... I was so happy watching people doing so interesting things with their heart beside, like Emily Dickinson's poem:

'It's all I have to bring today/This, and my heart beside/This, and my heart, and all the fields/ And all the meadows wide....'

At the same time, I have been feeling this frustration. Why did I take this path? Where was my movement research? Couldn't I move in a different way? More butoh-like? Was it pressure? Shyness?

Well, I don't know what happened, but I also was with my heart beside and I like to repeat this phrase: important is not to find out the secrets of the things, but dialogue with the mystery.

My family can't listen to me saying that any more, so I keep saying to friends.

Love, Flavia

I understand Flavia's phrase '[i]mportant is not to find out the secrets of the things, but dialogue with the mystery' in the sense that, for a performer, it is not necessary to spell things out or to be analytical. From this sentence, a view of performance work as an enchanted world, governed by intuition, emerges.

Adam, from Scotland, writes:

Hi all,

I also have a bunch of stuff churning away in the depths – not sure how much can be put into words (and also a lifetime's rigorous training in keeping these things to myself to overcome) – but will attempt a few thoughts.

Powerful, real moments came from the performer's internal engagement. As soon as you start 'phoning it in' it loses its life. Thinking about how this applies to my other artistic interests – do I need physical/emotional warmup to do real drawing, for example?

Realization – tragedy and comedy are not mutually exclusive. I found some of the parts of my own dance that came from the most painful memories were the ones that got the biggest laughs (how strange – this was such a cathartic experience. Laughing with as opposed to laughing at?). Also thinking about the individual character of the other performances. Has to do more with the character of the performer and the attitude or approach to the memory? I'm not sure if I can get across or re-experience how much this thought affected me, but when it hit me (in the shower) it had me hunched over, sobbing, and repeating over and over 'It can be both, it can be both.'

Went straight back into work on Monday. More aware than ever of the disparity between my flat, empty, rigid, soulless working day and the richness, vibrancy, peculiarity and wholeness of the life that I have been glimpsing more and more. This weekend felt like a step through a doorway and I don't want to go back. Am sneaking in little Butoh moments in the bathroom at work, trying out different funny walks in

town. Making strange, haunting sounds. Took today (Wed) off just to spend some time with it – moving, painting etc.

The essentialness of performance – things need to be shared with and received by others to be meaningful.

Again, my deep thanks to you all for the chance to share so much with such beautiful souls. Hope to see you all again soon.

Getting all misty-eyed,

In Adam's email, the perceived contrast between the 'flat, empty, rigid and soulless working day' and the 'richness, vibrancy, peculiarity and wholeness' of performance is quite striking. Ayala, who was born in Israel but has lived most of her life in England, replies to that:

Dear Adam and all,

There always seems to be a corresponding low to balance out the highs of any experience.

I felt great for a day or two after the weekend, as if I had found myself more fully and could inhabit that person properly. Since then, as Adam indicates, the demands of one's 'ordinary' rather than 'heightened' life surface once more.

I have spent this week trying to view, assess, and comment on 1400+ indifferent/plain-bad pictures of horse ailments and going slower and slower, with the result that the job stretches out longer and longer.... feeling less and less alive.

However, I know it is not possible to live a continuously heightened

existence and we are lucky to be able to experience it temporarily through our Butoh practice and in a wonderful, enriching, shared way (rather than through individual pharmacological experiment, for instance!).

During the workshop, I felt very exposed at first, as I am not used to being much with people any more (and always have felt somewhat alien), but in the end I felt freed – much as you might feel taking off all your clothes on the beach and entering a wild sea. But you can't stay there. I suppose the thing is to remember what it was like and what it taught you.

As to character/approach – if a person is the sum of their experience – and, I suppose, genetic make-up – I think these are the same thing. As I mentioned to Yael, I think I might have been a rather different person if we had not stayed in England but gone back to Israel as planned. The tree of a life branches outwards and outwards, and you can't go back to an earlier junction and try a different path.

See you all later, I hope. Love, Ayala

Both Adam and Ayala remark on, though in different ways, the contrast between real and performative life, between ordinary and heightened states, between enchantment and disenchantment. Finally, a metaphorical, holistic and synthetic mode of thought can be found in the email sent by Mira, from South Africa, who writes:

Thank you all for a very special weekend.

Thank you to each of you for your beautiful transparency and for holding the space in such a way that things could really come to the surface.

I guess the process for me is summed up in the last couple of sentences of my life story...

‘Like bones scattered in a desert... Searching how to gather and heal and be whole...’

Butoh offers me this process of taking things apart and then reassembling them – and then the process ultimately starts all over again...

Thank you again.

Mira

Note how, in the last paragraph of Mira's email, the theme of liminality as a process of semantic dismantling and reassembling, reemerges. In contrast to Bruno's email, where the focus was on language, this time it is the body itself that it is understood as the centre of the dismantling and reassembling, as powerfully conveyed by the image: ‘Like bones scattered in a desert... Searching how to gather and heal and be whole...’

7.5 Recapitulations and conclusion

The central purpose of this chapter was to provide evidence for the ‘shifting sensorium’ in butoh when moving from a context of training to one of performance. Even though I set out to address a performance type of situation, I resorted to yet another training situation, a performance workshop, as a case study. This choice was justified by the specific kind of workshop in question: one in which the participants were not just going through physical training, but also given clues of performance techniques, and put in the condition to perform. Thus, the workshop offered a unique opportunity to investigate the making of the body into a performative artefact.

In examining the performance workshop through an anthropological framework, in the first section of the chapter I focused on the main socio-sensory dynamics at work. For instance, I showed how a change in proxemic patterns among participants determined a change in their social roles, i.e. from participant to performer, or from participant to audience member. I also reviewed my own experience of accessing altered states of awareness during the workshop, as mediated by an intensified tactile-kinesthetic sense. In the second section, I examined techniques for generating new meanings in performance. The analysis of the final solos evidenced how the performer's transfiguring body hexis mediated processes of meaning-making and imagination. Drawing on Turner's theory of liminality (1982) I showed how, in performance, the manipulation and distortion of the body's *indexical* nature dislocated normative categories and generated alternative significances. Also, I argued that the particular performance techniques adopted in this workshop facilitated a shift from an analytic and language-driven mode of thinking, to a metaphorical and emotion-driven one, a process that I interpreted as generating a sense of *communitas* among the workshop participants.

Through my discussion of this chapter I have built on the anthropological theory on the senses, on ritual and aesthetic experience, and on deep participation in ethnographic practice. Also, I have elaborated on the social value of performance and butoh by explaining the extent in which these practices might have, albeit temporarily, an impact on the social and on the individual dimensions of experience.

CHAPTER EIGHT

8 Butoh as performance: Time, spaces and the senses

8.1 Introduction

In Part I, I argued that, despite butoh dancers' foundational aspiration of returning to the natural body, butoh images and exercises affect a dancer's sensory relationship with the body, the environment, and other dancers. In this respect, the butoh dancer's body can be understood as much 'cultural' and 'socialised' as any other body.

I described how butoh training directs the dancer's attention towards new trajectories of perception. I argued that, although the great variety of imagery and exercises suggests the disparateness of butoh aesthetics, the unravelling of the bundle of sensations that butoh training promotes is to be understood primarily as a tactile-kinesthetic⁵⁰ endeavour.

While maintaining the focus on the processes of sensory and cultural constitution of the butoh body, the main concern of this chapter is to draw attention to its 'performative' component, and particularly towards 'aesthetic communication' as it unfolds between butoh dancers and their audiences. The notion of 'aesthetic communication' that I use in this chapter is thus based on an understanding of 'aesthetics' as pertaining to sensory perception and the field of non-verbal communication and orientation (Cox 2003, p. 74).

⁵⁰ Authors such as Gibson (1966) consider kinesthesia as one of the many manifestations of the haptic sense, which for Gibson corresponds to the tactile sense. The latter is, in turn, 'too complex to be classified' (Gibson 1966, p. 98).

This chapter is roughly divided in three sections, each one bringing to the fore a particular aspect of 'aesthetic communication' in butoh. In the first section, I outline theories of the 'audience-performer encounter,' with the specific aim of highlighting the social dynamic of the sensory and the non-verbal. In the second, I introduce the reader to recurring aesthetic traits of butoh in performance, and argue that such traits can account for perceptions and representations of butoh as 'mysterious,' 'sacred,' 'liminal,' and the like. Finally, in the third section, I address performers' sensory negotiation of an audience's presence, and explore how variations in 'setting' may affect the configuration of the performer-audience encounter. The last two sections are supported by in-text plates and by audio-visual material, which can be found in the DVD accompanying this thesis.

The general aim of this chapter is to direct us towards an anthropological and aesthetic analysis of butoh in performance. A further aim is to give an account of the work of *Café Reason* outside the walls of the dance studio, while attempting an assessment of the dilemma of contemporary butoh as a genre, thriving half-way between between ritual and aesthetic performance.

8.2 Intensities of performance

8.2.1 A performer-audience encounter

In the following excerpt from an interview, *Café Reason* founder Jeannie recalls her first encounter with an audience: it was at a dance festival in Japan, where she appeared in two pieces choreographed by butoh dancer Katsura Kan.

I really have a strong memory of being on stage that time. It was quite a big hall, in a much bigger theatre than Pegasus [in Oxford]. It was more like a playhouse, and it was a full audience, and there were a lot of different people performing. ... I had never done anything like that before. I had never been into performing, really, in any way beforehand. I was always very self-conscious. ...

It was two pieces that I was in:

In the first piece I was in a big plastic bag rustling in the dark. That was great 'cause I could not see anything and I was just rustling around. We had this pattern and we were repeating the pattern that we just ruffled around.

In the next piece I was suddenly on stage with this group of twelve dancers, and I was just part of the chorus; we were doing this slow repetitive movement. We went out on stage and it was dark. But then the lights suddenly changed and I suddenly saw all the faces of the audience, and I just started crying.

I was just crying and crying and crying, but I could not stop moving and it felt really [pauses] ... it felt like a crucible, like there was some kind of chemical reaction happening, some change of substance, and I was just completely gripped. I felt like I was taking part in some kind of magical transformation [pauses] I can't really describe it.

...I didn't feel self-conscious. I was crying but it wasn't about having stage fright or anything like that. It was just the shock of the change. It wasn't that I was upset. I can't really describe what it was. It was just extraordinary. And I knew, after that, I just really wanted to do it again (Jeannie, personal conversation).

Jeannie's account provides an interesting example of a performer-audience encounter, which is relevant to our discussion on the sensory patterns of butoh dancing. It appears that two qualitatively different sensory configurations – *being seen* as opposed to *not being seen* – determined two markedly different encounters with an audience. In the first dance piece, Jeannie could not see the audience because she went on stage inside a plastic bag, and 'that was great' for her because she could focus exclusively on her dance pattern; in the second dance piece she 'suddenly saw all the faces of the audience' and started crying.

Jeannie's emotional response to the novelty of the experience might have been amplified by the fact that her first encounter with an audience took place in a big theatre, and by the fact that she was in a foreign country (Japan). However, in describing her emotion when she saw the audience, she insists that she was not feeling upset or afraid. Rather, she was shocked by the 'encounter' *per se*, which she describes through expressions such as 'crucible,' 'chemical reaction,' 'change of substance,' and 'magical transformation.'

Performer and choreographer Yael Karavan, who I referred to in Chapter Seven, told me that nowadays she always looks forward to performing in big theatres, or anyway in spaces that can accommodate no less than 200 people, because she enjoys 'the energy' that she gets back from the presence of such a vast audience when she is performing. She also reflects on the fact that when such a big audience is watching her, she can 'use' the 'energy coming from the audience:' as though that energy can transport her to unexpected places, making her performance more intense (Yael, personal conversation).

Although it is not possible to empirically assess the perception of ‘energy’ generated by the co-presence of audience and performers, nonetheless, in this chapter, I will explore perceptual aspects relating to this encounter in the context of butoh performance.

In the next section, I shall introduce some theories from the anthropology of dance and the anthropology of performance to help us investigate this matter.

8.2.2 ‘Intensity of performance’

Expressions such as ‘magical transformation,’ ‘chemical reaction,’ ‘out of the ordinary experience,’ which Jeannie used in her description of her first encounter with an audience, are common in the study of theatre, a domain that is set aside from everyday life and behaviour. We have considered the work of Richard Schechner (1985), one of the leading figures in performance studies, in Chapter Two. In relation to our current discussion he has written: ‘theatrical reality is marked “nonordinary—for special use only”’ (ibidem, p. 117). Concerned with the nature of ‘performance’ across activities as various as play, ritual, games, theatre, and sports, Schechner’s work provides an important roadmap to the countless dimensions of what he calls the ‘intensity of performance.’

Understanding “intensity of performance” is finding out how a performance builds, accumulates, or uses monotony; how it draws participants in or intentionally shuts them out; how space is designed or managed; how the scenario or script is used—in short, a detailed examination of the whole performance text. Even more, it is an examination of the experiences and actions of all participants, from the director to the child sleeping in the audience (Schechner 1985, p. 12).

I subscribe to Schechner's exhortation to examine 'the whole performance text' (ibidem) as a complex interweaving of aesthetic, technical and directorial factors, as well as out-of-script experiences and actions. In the context of the present discussion, however, I will address only three aspects of what Schechner's all-encompassing conception of performance involves. Those are 1) 'how a performance builds, accumulates, or uses monotony' – a process that I refer to as the 'tempo' or 'rhythm' of a performance; 2) 'how it draws participants in or intentionally shuts them out' – an aspect that I briefly refer to as 'communication' or 'co-presence' (Strathern 1996, p. 202) with an audience, and 3) 'how space is designed or managed' – which I simply refer to as 'space.'

8.2.3 Non-verbal communication, mutuality and the 'performance loop'

In the fields of performance studies, anthropology of performance, and anthropology of dance, authors have directed their attention towards the relationship between the performers and the audience.

Schechner holds that '[n]o theater performance functions detached from its audience' (1985, p. 10). In those performances where the role of the audience seems relatively passive, still some kind of 'communication' unfolds throughout the simultaneous presence of audience and performers:

...even when apparently passive, as at a concert of classical music or a performance of Racine, a full house eager to see this performance, to attend the work of this particular artist, literally lifts a cast of players, propels, and sustains them (ibidem, p. 10).

Schechner also notes that different types of performance involve different degrees of 'mutuality' between performers and audience and, particularly,

different degrees of audience knowledge or ability to 'actively' engage with what they are watching (ibidem, pp. 136–150). To fully enjoy a Noh performance, for instance, requires a high degree of knowledge of the conventions of the genre by the audience. The latter is often composed of experts and students of Noh, who are attached to different schools (ibidem, p.143). Meanwhile, although a highly stylized genre, Noh theatre is also highly 'contingent,' as it involves variations in response to the moment (ibidem). Trained members of the audience draw pleasure in spotting the way Noh performers deal with such contingencies, thus displaying their familiarity with the art.

Noh's apparent solemnity and fixity are deceptive. At its core is a set of contingencies unmatched elsewhere in world theater. ... Noh takes advantage of the immediacy of the encounter among artists and between the ensemble and the audience. An audience of connoisseurs is aware of, and delights, in these contingencies (Schechner 1985, p. 143).

Anthropologist Judith Hanna (1983) has dedicated a book to the analysis of the 'connection' between performers and audience, and particularly to the communication of emotions in dance. She maintains that dance is about communication, a type of communication that is even more deep and effective in that it takes place at a non-verbal level. That is, the fact that dance is based on the dynamics of the human body, allows it to captivate the 'observer's consciousness' in ways that other art forms cannot (ibidem, p. 3). The role of the senses appears central in the dancers-audience communication:

Through perception of the multisensory stimulation of sight, sound, movement, touch, and smell, the dancing body excites emotions. Dancing arouses feelings via its associations with basic life functions,

pleasures, pain, and guilt. Birth, life, and death are bodily, and the human is the vessel and vehicle of dance (Hanna 1983, p. 3).

Non-verbal language, or paralanguage, is among the themes explored by musicologist Christopher Small (1998) in his theory of 'musicking,' a notion that encompasses all musical activities, from composing to performing to singing in the shower. For Small, all human activities, including musicking, are about relationships, and humans, as well as other animals, adopt paralanguage to orient themselves in the complexity of these relationships and interactions.

Bodily postures and movement, facial expression, and vocal intonation provide in the more complex animals a wide repertory of gestures and responses by means of which information about relationships is given and received. In complex and contradictory creatures like human beings these gestures can deal with a number of complex and even contradictory relationships, all at once (ibidem, p. 57).

Finally, anthropologist and opera singer William O. Beeman (2007) adopts the concept of 'performance loop,' to denote the process by which 'performers and audience participate in reinforced feedback' (ibidem, p. 275). Beeman argues that one of the purposes of performance is to change the cognitive states of others: 'There is no reason for a performance to endure as a human activity if the possibility of affecting an audience is not present' (ibidem).

According to all these scholars, performance is about communication, or rather, a variety of special kinds of communication, which often elude linear logic or conventional notions of 'information,' e.g., by engaging sensory and non-verbal dimensions of meaning instead. With these notions in mind, I now turn to the aspect communication in butoh performance.

8.3 Aesthetics of ‘otherness:’ butoh in performance

Since its earliest and most radical manifestations, butoh has been seen as exercising a powerful and unsettling effect on the audience by creating uncanny yet compelling atmospheres. An example of butoh’s aesthetic intensity as experienced by an audience member, is given by Korean American artist Nam June Paik, who describes his impression of watching a performance by butoh founder Hijikata:

At some point Hijikata attached to himself a large phallic symbol⁵¹ and danced.... It was neither as stylized nor as “serious” as the later Sankaijuku group, with whom Hijikata had tight personal ties. I cannot describe it very correctly now after thirty years, but my impression at that time was that it was quite original, fresh, and touched on the dark source of the deep Asian soul. ... I use the German word *unheimlich* which combines the feeling of inscrutable, mysterious, profound, scary, and quiet (Nam June Paik, quoted in Munroe 1994, p. 78).

In Chapter One I discussed how depictions of butoh as ‘mysterious’ and ‘other’ were common in dance reviews (e.g. Roquet 2003, p. 14; Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, p. 76) as they are in critiques of butoh in general. In this chapter I shall argue that such perceptions can be understood via an analysis of the aesthetic elements in butoh performance. The task is to determine how the physical and performative qualities of butoh dancing may be given, through a process of aesthetic transformation, cultural or religious value (Cox 2003, p. 77). In particular, I would like to assess how recurring physical and performative elements of butoh performances, via their objectification into

⁵¹ Nam June Paik might be referring to Hijikata’s 1968 performance ‘Rebellion of the body’ (*Nikutai to hanran*), also known as ‘Revolt of the flesh.’

aesthetic components, underlie discourses and perceptions of butoh as 'mysterious' and 'other.'

My analysis will be supported by three examples of butoh performances, the first two of which can be found in the DVD at the back of this thesis:⁵² the first is a live improvisation by Japanese dancer Itto Morita (2009), the second is a semi-improvised piece by Chilean dancer Macarena Ortuzar (2010) and the third is an excerpt from a choreographed performance by *Café Reason*, entitled *La Table* (2000). Through each one of these examples I shall attempt to highlight one or two aspects of butoh dance's 'aesthetics of otherness.'

8.3.1 Darkness, semi-darkness and the body as 'other'

One of the elements playing a role in the perception of butoh as mysterious is the extensive use of darkness and semi-darkness on stage.

Klein (1988) pointed out that this was a characteristic of premodern Noh and Kabuki, due to the fact that electric lighting did not exist at the time and, therefore, the stage had to be lit by candles. The first butoh dancers recovered the traditional Noh and Kabuki lighting practice at a time when electric lighting was available. By doing so, they went against the Western tendency of brightening the stage and leaving the audience in the darkness. As Klein argues, whereas the Western use of lighting separated the 'ideal' world of the stage from the 'real' one of the audience, the use of darkness in butoh reinforced the sense of sharing' the theatrical experience between performers and audience: 'little distinction was made between the lighting of the stage and the light on the audience, both being equally dim.... The undifferentiated darkness creates an atmosphere that imbues even the most

⁵² The third example was not included in the DVD because the copyright of the recording does not belong to the author.

grotesque images with an evocative, mysterious beauty' (ibidem, p. 49). By blurring the interpersonal boundaries, darkness created a sense of intimacy.

The use of darkness and semi-darkness on stage is still common practice among butoh performers. For instance, in a live improvisation with musician Efthymios Chatzigiannis [DVD: *Title 1*], butoh dancer Itto Morita (aka Prof. Toshiharu Kasai) stands for a long time in semi-darkness facing the audience, with his mouth open and his palms and fingers facing upwards. The outline of his whitened body standing out against the dark background, he remains nearly still for about two minutes, rocking slightly, before he slowly begins to advance towards the audience [at approx. 00:02:17].

Besides the darkness, there are other elements that contribute to creating a feeling of 'otherness' in this piece, most notably, the sound environment and the dancer's use of the body, as described below.

In the background, a low, atmospheric sound is being played. As Morita advances towards the audience [from 00: 02:17 to 00:03:40 approx.] with his upper body quasi-immobilized, one can catch a glimpse of the 'dead body' of butoh: the overall impression is that his body is being moved by an invisible force, and on the verge of crumbling at each step.

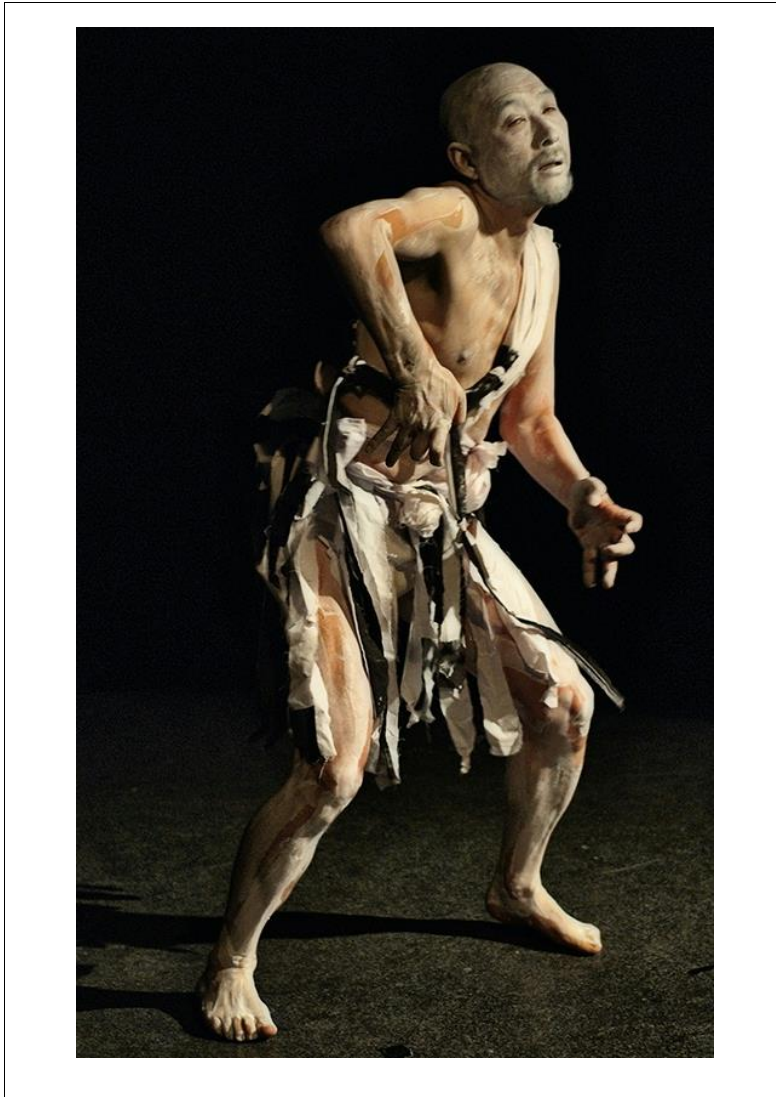


Plate 10: Itto Morita (photo: courtesy of Dariusz Dziala)

[From approx. 00:03:46] Morita begins to lose his initial form: his hands shift to the front, the head is lowered, and the right arm leads the body's journey into a new form. Both his arms twist and stretch; [from around 00:05:03 until 00:05:29] his left arm is almost unnaturally twisted and projected backwards and upwards, appearing as though it wants to disconnect from the rest of the body.

The sound environment begins to change [approx. 00:06:00]. Morita, who is momentarily wrapped by the darkness, steps back into the light. The rhythm

of his walking slows down, in sharp contrast with the intensified rhythm of the soundscape: [at approx. 00:06:46] his body movements seem to synchronize with the environmental sound and [from 00:06:53 until 00:08:19] tremors, spasms, twitches, and contortions appear, leading to occasional 'loss of control.'

[At 00:08:23] Morita's body is once again in the shadow. This time, flashes of light pursue him, while the sound intensifies the sense of fragmentation generated by his convulsive movements. He continues to play between light and darkness [00:09:12] while [at 00:10:00 and until 00:10:30 approx.] arms and hands appear imbued with their own agency. [At 00:10:48] Morita is on the ground and his body is assailed by a new series of spasms, before, once again, he withdraws into darkness. Soon afterwards [00:11:48] his right arm again leads the movement; this time, his movements appear softer, less convulsive, and more playful.

A change in sound [00:13:17] signals a change in atmosphere. Morita curls up in the spotlight, eventually rolling out of it, towards the surrounding darkness. Morita's movements can be glimpsed as he dances in the threshold between light and darkness. The sound atmosphere softens until it completely dies out [approx. 00:15:55], with the exception of the background drone with which the piece started. At this point, Morita approaches the end of his piece by returning to his initial position: mouth open and palms and fingers facing upwards.

8.3.2 The butoh body as 'other'

In Chapter Five I argued that some butoh exercises allow the practitioner to develop kinesthetic awareness of body parts, which are then experienced and treated as independent or isolated, as well as enhancing the sense of

interconnection between body and environment, for instance, the relationship between body and gravity.

Morita's piece can be seen as a result of this kind of practice.⁵³ at different points in Morita's dance, different body parts appear as 'foreign,' as though independent from the rest of the body, or even imbued with 'their own agency.' This illusion of separateness is achieved by, for instance, moving one part of the body in a way that is markedly different from the rest of the body. For instance, I have noticed how, on a couple of occasions, Morita's right arm appears to be 'leading the movement' – in the sense that it appears to be moving more dynamically than the rest of the body, so that the latter has to, so to say, 'follow.' Also, from about 00:05:03 to 00:05:29, Morita's left arm is almost unnaturally twisted and it moves in a direction opposite to the rest of the body as though it is attempting 'to detach' itself from his trunk.

Morita explained that once he was involved in an accident in which he injured his left arm and, consequently, he had to undergo arm surgery. After that, he could twist his left arm in a way that appears very strange, almost unnatural. Morita told me that he takes advantage of the 'unnatural movements of his arm' in butoh performances, where he treats his arm as an uncanny object.

As already mentioned in Chapter Three, Itto Morita is the stage name of Toshiharu Kasai, who is also Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Sapporo and a dance therapist in mental clinics in Japan. Morita told me that his butoh is influenced by the fact that he works with mentally disabled people, including patients affected by schizophrenia. The extensive use of

⁵³ Specifically, Morita's work is informed by 'Noguchi Taiso,' a technique that is adopted by several butoh dancers, including *SankaiJuku*, which consists mainly in integrating movement with the feeling of gravity acting on the body (Fraleigh and Nakamura 2006, pp. 120; 126).

tics, tremors, jerks, and facial and bodily distortions in his dance can be seen as a result of observing and absorbing the involuntary somatic behaviour of people affected by psychosomatic disability.

Having practiced and performed butoh internationally for more than twenty years, Morita sees himself as part of the Japanese 'lineage' of butoh dancers. An experienced performer, Morita is aware that an audience needs to be drawn into the performance through a variety of 'tricks' (Morita, personal conversation). For instance, with relation to his use of a very fixed form at the beginning and at the end of the piece – mouth open, elbows tucked in, and palms open towards the sky – Morita explains that this was what, in the context of that particular improvisation, he found most appropriate in order to grab the audience's attention by directing their focus to 'one thing only' (ibidem).

Morita also says that, usually, while he is dancing, he tries to 'perceive' the audience: 'To think about the audience is not sufficient. You have to get a sense of what is happening, not just on my side [the performer's] but also the other side [the audience's]' (Morita, personal communication). This attitude indicates that, while dancing, Morita is not only proprioceptively focused on his own movements, but also exteroceptively engaged with his environment.

Morita's understanding of butoh performance can be described as an 'encounter,' in which the dancer attempts to go 'beyond himself' and his familiar world, to meet something unexpected and unknown. This 'something' is framed by the particular time and space in which the performance takes place:

Every time, my performance is neither for the audience nor for myself. The sound and the space – the place – is something that is given, somehow, as a kind of happening to me. My task is simple: trying to live

the contingent space/time/sound/environment as seriously as possible using my body/mind because it is a kind of altar where your whole existence is disclosed and tested, a kind of serious confrontation with something, you might call it God?Or something deeply spiritual (Morita, personal communication).

In Morita's account, the enclosed, contingent time/space of the improvisation is imbued with the significance of a ritual. His account evokes an idea of performance as sacrifice or, alternatively, as initiation – '...your whole existence is disclosed and tested, a kind of serious confrontation with something' – in which the performer goes through an intensification of experience, leading to a sense of existential synthesis as evoked, for example, by the words 'God' or 'deeply spiritual.'

In the example of butoh performance I have provided, the sound atmosphere, the extensive use of darkness and semi-darkness, and a particular use of the body, all contribute to reproducing butoh as mysterious and other. In the next section, I shall further my analysis of 'otherness' in butoh performance, with particular attention to the aspects of 'non-representation' and the disruption of the familiar.

8.3.3 Non-representation and the disruption of the familiar

'Anti-representation' can be accounted for as another factor adding to the displacing efficacy of butoh in performance.

Klein (1988) has identified one of the main anti-representational strategies of butoh in the extensive use of 'pastiche' or the random combination of different aesthetic vocabularies (ibidem, pp. 20-23). She observes that the first *ankoku butoh* dancers combined movement techniques drawn from different dance, theatre or martial art traditions – from Noh to Kabuki, from Kathakali to Tai Chi

Chuan. Klein notes that '[a]lthough many of these movements and gestures had quite specific meanings within their own traditional context, those meanings were stripped away in the appropriation process, becoming unintelligible (or unreadable) to the viewer' (ibidem, p. 21). This, according to Klein, makes butoh different from, for instance, classical Indian dance where each set of movements has a specific meaning or specific associations. The dismantling of the link between signifier and signified – between gesture, or set of gestures, and meaning – makes butoh 'anti-representational' as well as 'liminal,' in the sense highlighted by Turner (1982), for whom 'liminality' involves a 'ludic' recombination of well-established cultural factors in ways that are unexpected, meaningless and often grotesque: '...in liminality, people "play" with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty thus emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements' (ibidem, p. 27). In a similar line of thought, Kurihara (1996) correlates butoh's power of 'enstrangement' to the surrealist practice of stripping everyday life objects and words from any association with their functional, everyday purposes and uses, hence creating a new order of things (ibidem, p. 63).

Macarena Ortuzar's dance [DVD: Title 2] offers an example of this. In her performance, Ortuzar uses, first, a roll of white paper and, later, a large plastic basin that she has filled with sand. In interacting with the props – for instance, by exploring visual, sonic and tactile-kinesthetic properties of her physical encounter with the props – Ortuzar imbues these ordinary, everyday use objects with new life: we could say that the props become her 'dance partners.' The exploratory, interactive nature of Ortuzar's dance justifies Fraleigh's description of the butoh body as 'relational,' 'empathic' and 'somatically resonant:'

The butoh body is relational and not representational. It doesn't exist to display the self or show technical feats, and it is not about narrative....

Butoh can be understood in terms of the dancer's capability for

conscious change and empathic embodiment. Such empathy is relational and somatic – belonging to the life of human feeling and therefore to the body as experienced by the self in relation to others and the environment.... I like to speak of empathy as “somatic resonance,” using the language of the body as experienced (Fraleigh 2010, p. 48).



Plate 11: Macarena Ortuzar and Bruno Guastalla performing

In the case of Ortuzar, I argue that ‘somatic resonance’ can be identified, for example, in the dancer’s ‘crumpling up’ in response to the textures of the paper underneath her feet [from 00:05:21 to 00:05:32 approximately]. The encounter between her feet and the paper generates sensory qualities and modalities that are constitutive of her dance.

Whereas Morita declared the importance of including the audience in the perceptual environment of his improvised dances, i.e. by ‘perceiving’ the

audience's presence, Ortuzar says that she does not want 'to be affected by the audience' (Ortuzar, personal communication). This is because when she performs she often feels like she *has to* dance *for* the audience, as though she 'must give something to the audience;' however, if she gives in to this tendency, the integrity of her dance might be disrupted: 'When I am on stage I feel like *I have to* create a relationship *with them*, that I have to dance *for them*. But that would be a modification of my dance' (Ortuzar, personal communication). This indicates that for Ortuzar, somehow the dance exists regardless of the audience's presence: it has integrity in its own. In this respect, Ortuzar's use of props could be seen as a strategy to clearly delimit the perceptual boundaries of her dance and not getting distracted by too many environmental inputs, a strategy that betrays a concern for the 'coherence' and 'structure' of the performance as an insulated theatrical artefact.



Plate 12: Ortuzar 'de-familiarizing' a plastic basin

In the same piece, it appears that, not only the objects, but also the dancer's body is 'defamiliarized.' Here, as in Morita's piece, an appearance of 'otherness' is produced through a technique of 'isolating' body parts, via tactile-kinesthetic and proprioceptive attention. Also here, as in Morita's dance, one can perceive the paradox of the dancer's body as, simultaneously, 'highly controlled' and 'out of control' [for instance, from 00:06:10 to 00:06:30; or from 00:09:41 to 00:10:22]. Furthermore, 'otherness' is generated through the adoption of radically unpractical, or even 'dysfunctional,' ways of using the body. For instance, towards the end of the piece, Ortuzar takes about two minutes [from 00:10:56 to 00:12:46 approx.] to perform the relatively simple action of lifting the plastic bowl – eventually emptying its content on her head. An anonymous member of the audience expressed her discomfort in watching this scene:

Macarena refuses to use her hands [in lifting the plastic bowl]. Why? A future can be made; it is not always stumbled onto. Why is choosing an already set path always tragic? I am quite happy as a robot. I imagine I'll die happily as a robot too (audience member, anonymous feedback form answer).

By saying that s/he would 'die happily as a robot,' the audience member appears to be not only detecting the 'demechanizing' intents behind Ortuzar's way of moving, but also criticizing it. If, indeed, Ortuzar's intent with her dance was to display the 'desocialised' and 'deautomated' body⁵⁴ – a body 'freed' from the unconscious automatisms of the socialised self – then the reaction of the member of the audience confronted by such a body can be

⁵⁴ My assumption that this might have indeed been Ortuzar's 'intent' is based on the notion of 'desocialisation' of the body that underlies Ortuzar's approach to butoh, as shown in Chapter Six.

understood as a sign that her performance was ‘successful:’ the sight of a normal body made ‘dysfunctional’ on stage⁵⁵ is not necessarily meant to please the audience, but to make an impression on them, whether positive or negative. Either way it can be a provocation to thought or, more likely, to emotion.

I argue that *butoh* performances like Ortuzar’s tend to reinforce the discourse of the ‘dysfunctional body’ in *butoh* as ‘desirable’ because it is ‘different,’ that is, emancipated from the world of habitual, functional action and thought. Such discourse is based on a statement by Hijikata, which is well known among *butoh* dancers:

Only when, despite having a normal, healthy body, you come to wish that you were disabled or had been born disabled, do you take your first step in *butoh*. A person who dances *butoh* has just such a fervent desire, much like a child’s longing to be crippled. (Hijikata 2000, p. 56).

In Hijikata’s dance, the disabled body – as well as the body of the newborn, the child, the dying, the homosexual, and the criminal – was understood as expression of the ‘non-functional’ and the ‘aimless.’ As such, it was set in contrast to the social and cultural paradigms brought about by the adoption of a capitalist model in the postwar period, as Hijikata himself expressed in the following words:

All the power of civilised morality, hand in hand with the capitalist

⁵⁵ Not all *butoh* dancers have ‘normal’ or ‘functional’ bodies in the conventional sense: Japanese-Korean dancer Manri Kim, for instance, is a well-known *butoh* dancer who lost the use of her legs after getting polio at the age of three. I witnessed her startling performance in Japan in 2007 at a Gala celebrating Kazuo Ohno’s 100th birthday.

economic system and its political institutions, is utterly opposed to using the body simply for the purpose, means, or tool of pleasure. Still more, to a production-oriented society, the aimless use of the body, which I call dance, is a deadly enemy which must be taboo. I am able to say that my dance shares a common basis with crime, male homosexuality, festivals, and rituals because it is a behaviour that explicitly flaunts its aimlessness in the face of a production-oriented society. (Hijikata 2000, pp. 44-45).

The anti-capitalist critique can still be considered as inherent in butoh to the extent that butoh continues to be based on the same aesthetic of 'dysfunction' that characterized its early manifestations, whether contemporary butoh dancers are consciously aware of those 'ideological' implications and intentionally pursue them, or not.

8.3.4 Time and kinesthetic imagination

In this section I wish to consider another aesthetic dimension to butoh performances, that is, the manufacturing of 'otherness' through altered perceptions of time. This opportunity is offered by the audience member's reaction to Macarena's dance, which is quoted at the end of the previous section. In the anonymous feedback form, the audience member expressed his or her discomfort in watching Macarena 'refusing' to use her hands as she lifted the plastic basin in her dance. S/he interpreted the same action as a statement on the idea of 'future,' and criticised the performance through the words 'A future can be made; it is not always stumbled onto.' In this sentence, two opposed representations of 'future' are presented side to side: a future that 'can be made,' and a future that is 'stumbled onto.' The notion of 'future' involves a sense of projection with relation to the unfolding of events. In a future that 'can be made,' the latter phrase 'can be made' indicates an agent's perspective and, consequently, a degree of control over the course of events.

Meanwhile, the metaphor of a 'set path' implies a sense of looking upon the course of events as though from a distance. By contrast, a future that is 'stumbled onto' involves a sense of the unplanned, the unforeseen and the imminent. This is a future that more closely resembles the present. Here one is not controlling the course of events, but is controlled by it. According to the audience member, Ortuzar's performance entailed a future of the second type. The discussion of this section addresses the question of why this should be so. More generally, it asks where the temporal dimension lies in Macarena's performance, if at all, and whether the same notion of temporality could be extended to *butoh* performances at large.

I argue that in the audience member's perception of Macarena's performance, as entailing a 'future that can be made,' one is looking on the passing of time, as though from an outside point of view (Ingold 2000, p. 196), from which he or she is able to influence, or 'make,' the course of events. The same perspective is 'founded upon an illusion of disembodiment' (*ibidem*) in that the agent is not immersed in, and part of, the flow of time, but observes it as though from above. In 'a future that is stumbled onto,' by contrast, one is not an onlooker, but a participant, suspended in the current of time. While 'stumbled onto' is used here with pejorative intent, it adequately conveys the physical causality of an immersion in time. This is a perspective in which the passage of time is 'none other than our *own* journey' (*ibidem*), one based on a continuous, corporeal encountering the world: not a disembodied projection, but an unfolding present.

Macarena's dance was enclosed in the spatio-temporal boundaries of a performance piece. Like other professional *butoh* dancers, including Morita himself, Macarena devised a loose choreography with set 'in-' and 'out-' points: these coincided with the two actions of kneeling by the roll of paper at start, while waiting for the music to begin, and of putting the plastic basin on her head before the lights went off. Within those pre-set performative boundaries, the two tasks of unfolding the paper roll (while stepping over it),

and of lifting the basin over her head (so that the sand would fall over her) provided the main choreographic framework. Meanwhile, the performative content lay in the way Macarena engaged with the tasks themselves, that is, as though they were random or, accidental, occurrences. It is my contention that Macarena's modality of engagement with her tasks, as grounded in a particular style of movement, or kinesthetic logic, engendered in the audience members the temporal 'illusion' (Gell 1992, p. 316) of a 'stumbled onto' future.

Many scholars have, of course, highlighted the interconnection between time and movement. Fleming (1945), for instance, argues that: 'Time and movement are inextricably interwoven, since all time is measured by movement and change of relative position, and all mobility has, of necessity, duration' (ibidem, p. 101). Adam (1994) also maintains that one of the many ways in which 'time' manifests itself is in the pace, or *tempo*, in which a particular activity is being carried out (ibidem, p. 511). For Rappaport, 'time and temporal experience are composed of a number of distinct although interrelated elements,' including, but not limited to, 'duration, change, motion, frequency, rhythm, velocity, passage, simultaneity, conception of a present, extension, [and] succession' (ibidem, p.174). He further contends that all humans possess an idiosyncratic sense of passage. However, since such sense of passage is

... unreliable, or at least subject to distortion, not only cannot itself serve as the ground for temporal ordering but may itself generate a need for the public ordering of time, not simply to coordinate social life, but to provide a well-marked road along which each individual's temporal experience can travel. (Rappaport 1999, p. 177).

Meanwhile, Sheets-Johnstone suggests that the very concept of time may be rooted in self-movement:

we may ask whether the very *eidos* of time does not originate in

primordial self-movement, and correlatively, whether our everyday *verbal* concept of time, as evidenced in our speaking of time as *flowing*, does not have its origin in that nonlinguistic eidetic intuition. (2011, p. 133, emphasis in original).

She notes that both voluntary and involuntary movements – sneezing, laughing, yawning, sobbing, breathing, and so on (p.133) – entail a temporal dimension, which is intrinsic to their very ‘qualitatively-inflected’ unfolding (ibidem, pp. 129-132). Even standing still entails a certain temporality, as being still is punctuated by hundreds micro-movements toward postural self-adjustment (Manning 2009, p. 44). As philosopher Manning puts it,

[p]osture is not a stopping. It is a stilling of the between of the body’s reconfigurations in extensive and intensive space-time. ... Posture is the quality of the moving-through. It is not a position, not something to aim for or to attain: it is a movement with movement reconfiguring (ibidem).

Macarena’s dance also unfolded as micro-movements, not toward stillness but of adjustment to the space-time of the performance contingency. It adjusted to the passing of sound, flowing into its ephemeral grooves, expanding its durations, diverting its tensions, echoing its fading frequencies. It adjusted to the physical environment, in manifold micro-encounters. Caught in the perceptual entanglement of successive relations, the dancer’s agency was dissected and reassembled into a hyper-relational, unstable, quasi-chaotic body.

We have seen that the time of the dance was externally established through choreography and music. It was also inherent to the dance as a kaleidoscope of encounters between the dancer’s body and the physical and acoustic environment. The temporality of the dance was thus, in effect, an interweaving of many concurrent ‘temporalities’ (Edensor 2008) articulating as unfolding micro-relations, the centre of which was the perceptive body, a vessel. *Café Reason* member Ayala expresses butoh dancers’ typical attitude

towards dance in the following terms:

Assuming that you had to move from a point A to a point B in space, whereas one would normally walk in a straight line from A to B, a butoh dancer would set off by taking all the possible detours, letting the body speak at each moment, one moment at the time, before reaching point B – *if* he or she ever gets there (Ayala, paraphrasing a personal communication).

The opening scene of *La Table, a Café Reason* performance in 2000 offers another example of this. In this scene, a group of dancers lie on a table; although they are not *actively* moving, the minimal movement of their breathing and of their bodies, sliding against one another, can be noticed. Soon it becomes apparent that the dancers are sliding away from each other while also drifting toward the edges of the table. As they do so, the overall composition changes shape. For instance, at one point, one or two bodies are hanging in the balance at the edges of the table, while others have already reached the floor. This scene can be understood as a self-contained butoh image in which, if interpreted in Ayala's terms, 'point A' corresponds to the initial position of the dancers spread on the table, and 'point B' corresponds to the point they will have all reached on the floor.

The point, in this scene, is not for the dancers to move synchronically with one another, according to a pre-established 'scheme,' but to just keep an awareness of each other by 'breathing together' (Ayala, personal communication). Meanwhile each dancer also focuses 'internally' on the qualities of their own movements, as based on the given choreographic instruction of 'dripping off the table' (ibidem). Finally, the image-verb

'dripping'⁵⁶ specifies an important principle of aesthetic efficacy in butoh, where a relatively simple action unfolds as though it were an organic, natural process, that is, as though the dancers' bodies were inanimate substances moulded by physical forces, in this case, water dripping. That is, 'dripping' provides an intuitive rhythmical reference as for the way in which the main task of falling is to be carried out.

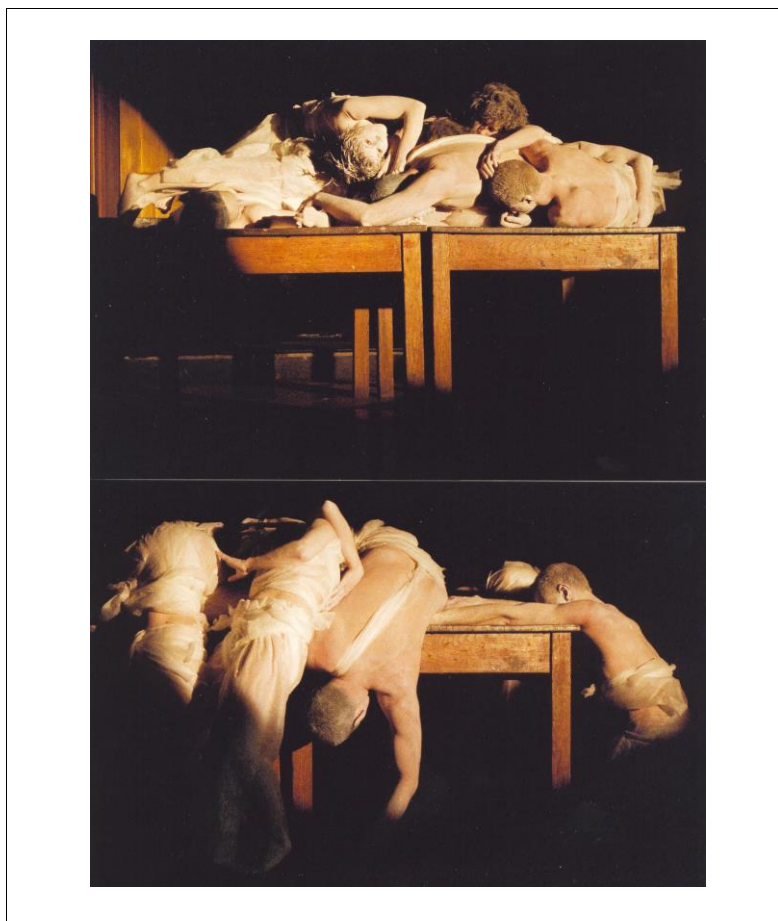


Plate 13: A scene from 'La Table' (2000) by Bruno Guastalla and Ana Barbour (photo: courtesy of Paul Freestone)

⁵⁶ I witnessed a similar image of 'dripping' in DaiRakudaKan's performance 'Dobu' in Tokyo in 2007. At the beginning of the performance, dancers started 'dripping,' one by one, from the top of a thirty-feet high set of steps made of wooden blocks [Plate 14].

Thus, in this piece several temporalities occur in the form of the different, 'mutually interlocking' tasks (Ingold 2000, p. 195) in which the performers engage. There is the temporality of the A-to-B 'time frame' in which the performative 'task' is enclosed, the 'social time' (Rappaport 1999) of the ritual contingency. There is the rhythmical cycle of breathing together. There is the rhythmical image of 'dripping.' There is the idiosyncratic temporal experience of each dancer. Finally, there is the encounter between bodies, and between bodies and physical space, as punctuated by a manifold micro-movements and micro-encounters. While such simultaneous temporalities are also possible in other types of theatre, what is distinctive about butoh dance is its engaging kinesthetically magnified perceptual micro-relations, as well as the adoption of internal rhythms, and of temporal patterns modelled on organic or natural processes.



Plate 14: A scene of DaiRakudaKan's performance 'Dobu' (2007). The dancer is 'dripping,' head-first, off a thirty-feet high set of steps made of wooden blocks (Source: <http://www.mcjp.fr/francais/spectacles/archives-103/dobu-77>)

8.4 Shifting audience-performers relationships from the classroom to the street

In this section I consider the relationship between butoh dancers and audiences across different performance settings – e.g., from the intimate space of the dance studio to public places of a local café in Oxford – as encountered in practice during my fieldwork with *Café Reason*. The aim of this analysis is to explore variations in butoh performance by this group based on varying socio-physical contexts.

8.4.1 Performance as a component of butoh training: the audience as insiders

In the previous chapters I have described the Friday evening class as a communal space constructed around sensory and image-based training and aimed at sensitizing the dancers' bodies. In this section I argue that training and body sensitization in butoh are not ends in themselves but are carried out with the perspective of performance in mind. This is shown, for instance, in the last 20 or 30 minutes of a class, when each participant – with the exception of the teacher who would just sit and watch – takes a turn improvising in front of the rest of the group as a way to practice performing in front of an audience.

Dancers improvise solo, in duet, or in a group according to the time available. The improvisation might relate to a particular exercise, a theme or an image that has been explored in the class. The presence of an audience is considered integral to the improvisation. This is shown by the fact that, just before the start of the improvisation (and sometimes in the course of the improvisation itself) Ana sometimes reminds the dancer/s: 'Remember that there is an audience watching you.' This recommendation usually translates in the dancer(s) avoiding turning their back(s) to the audience (which is

usually located at one side of the room), although Ana might add: 'It is okay to show your back as long you keep an awareness of the audience through your back.' When the time of the improvisation is up, at a hand gesture of the teacher, the live music begins to fade. At this point, the teacher addresses the dancer(s) with the words: 'Find your ending.' With a few additional movements, or none, the dancer finalises the improvisation and freezes into a shape. The dancer's conclusion is sealed by the applause of the audience; after that, the dancer withdraws from the dance space and joins the rest of the group, leaving the stage to the next dancer.

In her exhortation to the dancers, 'Remember that there is an audience watching you,' Ana reaffirms a principle of mutuality that is at the basis of the audience-performance encounter. While 'seeing' is the most obvious ground of 'theatre' – from the Greek *theasthai* 'to see, to view' (Turner 1982, p. 112) – 'being aware of being watched' is just as important (Small 1998, p. 146). Different performers have, of course, different ways of dealing with an audience's gaze. Morita, for instance, 'included the audience' in his performances, while Ortuzar intentionally 'shut the audience out,' as discussed in the previous section. Despite their differences in performance, in the context of training, butoh dancers are usually taught to be aware of their surroundings through their senses. For instance, Ana's prompt – 'keep an awareness of your audience through your back' – indicates that the dancers should not focus too much 'inward' but also 'outwards.' It also indicates that a non-visual mode of sensory attention, most likely tactile-kinesthetic, is at work. Appropriately Fraleigh (2010) has described the butoh dancer's body as a 'relational' or 'empathic' body, a definition that highlights the receptivity and responsiveness that the butoh dancer cultivates in relation to the environment, including the audience (ibidem, pp. 48-49).

Within the context of a Friday class the audience-performance relationship is played out within the group itself, with some dancers watching and others dancing, and then switching roles. In the case of improvisations that are led

at the end of a class as a part of the Friday evening training, usually 'anything goes.' When given, the feedback is generally positive, or anyway tends to highlight the strengths, rather than the weaknesses, of an improvisation. In this context, the shared assumptions are that 'all bodies are interesting' and that 'everybody can dance.' When the group is working towards a performance, improvisations led in the butoh class may be instrumental to the development of choreographic ideas, e.g., in this case, feedback is given to a dancer with a specific concern as for what would be most effective in a performance. Phrases such as 'At some point you did this...' or 'Oh, I really loved that moment when...' or 'It was brilliant when the two of you met and...' followed by details concerning an action or movement, a particular arrangement of the dancer's body in space or in relation to another dancer, help 'bracketing' the moments within the improvisation that were perceived as particularly significant, and that could be used as part of a choreography. Adjectives such as 'powerful' or 'strong' reinforce the sense of aesthetic efficacy that an audience may attach to those moments. Significant cues that an audience of insiders might identify include: the holding of a particular 'shape' for an extended period of time – especially if imbued with particular muscular tension – so that 'it leaves an imprint on the space;' a particular arrangement of the body or bodies in space, or in relation to each other; a shadow cast by the movements of a dancer against the wall, which adds an extra dimension to his or her dance, and so on. All these aesthetic elements – as mediated by the dancer's active awareness of the environment – are understood as enhancing an audience's aesthetic experience of the dance, as well as stimulating meaningful associations.

One such 'meaningful' association occurred once during a class improvisation involving two dancers. I wish to report this episode as an example of meaning-making involving both dancers and audience. At one point in the dance, one of the dancers landed in a position facing the pelvic area of another dancer, who was lying on the floor with her legs spread open.

Although the resulting body arrangement was imbued with sculptural tension – it had a definite ‘shape’ – the dancer who had inadvertently initiated the position, a newcomer to butoh, tried to move away from it in a way that came across as deliberate, hence betraying her discomfort with the ‘sexual’ connotation of that same shape. In suddenly moving away from that position, however, the dancer disrupted the coherence and spontaneity of the dance, thus transmitting to the audience a sense of ‘awkwardness.’ After the improvisation, in the context of feedback from the other dancers, Ayala made this point explicit: although that particular bodily arrangement was difficult to maintain, for the type of associations it might have triggered in the audience, the dancer who initiated it should have tried to ‘stay with it:’ the holding of such a difficult posture would have been much more interesting than simply moving away from it, pretending that it had not happened. It was clear, in fact, that the arrangement was a ‘mistake’ by the performer. While such mistake provoked feelings of empathy in an audience of dancers, a different type of audience might have experienced a range of emotions, from embarrassment, to discomfort, to amusement, or to just being unnerved by it. To Ayala, the potential of that particular arrangement to trigger a number of different responses was also its strength, its power ‘to move’ the audience.

8.4.2 Trees, insects, and stones: an intimate audience

At one *Café Reason* meeting I attended, I was struck by a conversation that sprung up spontaneously among some of the participants. We were discussing the possibility of our all taking part in a one-day landscape retreat workshop with Macarena Ortuzar. This topic triggered some reflections concerning the relevance of landscape retreats for the development of our

performance work.⁵⁷

It began with Ayala asking the others to what extent the landscape workshop would be more of a 'meditative' type of practice – of 'moving in and with the landscape' – and to what extent we would do it for an audience.

Ayala's question triggers responses from Ana, Paul, and Bitzia.

Ana says: 'I cannot perform without an audience. To me performance is about communication.'

Ayala's replies: 'Yes. And the basis for this communication is "*Here I am communicating this to you*".'

Paul intervenes by recalling a landscape retreat that we held some months earlier at Ana's farm: 'Can I ask you how you felt about the retreat into the woods – performing for an audience of plants, insects and stones? Because that was like having an audience, though it was also completely private.'

On that occasion Paul, who had led the one-day training, guided us into a place near the woods for a final improvisation. He asked all of us to disperse into the woods and perform a solo for an audience of bees, birds, plants, stones, trees, and everything that we could find on our way. As we all went off, very quietly, into the woods and began our improvisations, we could hear Malcolm's violin in the distance. After twenty minutes or so, we heard the sound of a pipe: it was the signal we should end our solos and return to the place where we started. Once we all gathered, we all walked in silence to another spot in the woods. There, one by one we re-performed our solos in front of the group. Paul had to say in relation to that practice: 'My strongest

⁵⁷ I have tried to reconstruct the conversation as faithfully as I could, having jotted it down as it unfolded among the participants, without intervening in the discussion in order not to interrupt its spontaneous flow.

impression is of seeing the workshopers returning from their individual solos in the woods and all four wearing the same quiet, serene expression, as if something mysterious and good had happened out there with their woody audience' (Paul, email communication).

With regard to the experience of performing in the woods, Ana now says: 'Actually that gave me a completely different perspective. To me, it was mainly thinking in terms of shifts in scale when you have a little audience that watches different parts of your body. For instance, at some point I saw an ant walking next to my hand – "Ah... here is this little ant, so close to my hand" – and I start thinking in terms of the difference that it makes to that ant if I am moving my hand from here to there, and how I move it.'

Bitzia intervenes by saying: 'Yes! And I was also thinking that the wind and the sun were witnessing my movements. Oh, what a difference it makes to have such a wonderful breeze as your audience!'

Finally, Paul says: 'For me it was mainly having an audience that is not critical; it was a sort of mirror audience, so I found myself doing movements that I would not usually do. And I tried to carry that feeling with me, as I performed in front of you guys.'

8.4.2.1 The audience as a projection of the performer: optical and haptic vision

There are two main things to be highlighted in this snapshot of conversation. The first is the notion of 'watching oneself from the outside.' In Chapter Six (section 6.3.2), we discussed the significance of this notion in the context of 'becoming an image.' I argue that the same notion is implicit in Ana's adoption of an ant's point of view in relation to her moving body. By Ana's

own admission, the notion of changing points of observation affected her perception of the 'scale' of her movements. I argue that, in Ana's case, the notion of watching oneself from the outside, or identification with the audience's point of view, signals a shift from an actual tactile-kinesthetic engagement to a virtual visual engagement with self-movement. Meanwhile, such virtual visual engagement is optically encoded in that it is distancing, as well as concerned with the material unification, coherence and scale of the form.

By way of contrast, let us consider Bitzia's adoption of the notion of 'watching oneself from the outside.' Instead of seeing it as a 'shift in scale,' Bitzia's identification with the audience's gaze manifests as a tactile engagement with the breeze and the sunlight, which she describes as 'witnesses' (note the use of a visual metaphor) of her movement. Hence, Bitzia's identification with an audience also signals a shift from actual tactility-kinesthesia to virtual vision. Yet such vision is haptic rather than optical.

As outlined in Chapter Five, whereas the optical privileges a view from a distance, for it 'depends on a separation between the viewing subject and the object' (Marks 2000, p. 162), a haptic type of looking 'tends to move over the surface of its objects rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It is more inclined to graze than to gaze' (ibidem). Differences between these two modes of visual engagement are also described by Ingold (2011):

Haptic engagement is close range and hands on. It is the engagement of a mindful body at work with materials and with the land, 'sewing itself in' to the textures of the world along the pathways of sensory involvement. An optical relation between mind and world, by contrast, is founded on distance and detachment. ... It is found, rather, by a kind of back-projection by which the world is cast as though fully formed, in

appearance but not substance – that is, as an image – upon the surface of the mind (ibidem, p. 133).

To summarize my argument so far, whereas optical vision best applies to Ana's version of 'watching oneself from the outside' in the form of a scale shift, haptic vision is most suitable to describe Bitzia's version of the same notion in the form of imagining the breeze and the sunlight as 'witnessing' her movements. This distinction is based on the idea that 'haptic visuality involves the body more than is the case with optical visuality' (Marks 2000, p. 163). Meanwhile, it is important to remark that the visual shift occurs, as I said, virtually rather than actually. In identifying with the point of view of an audience the performers feel the audience's gaze on them. Such 'audience's gaze' coincides with what Sheets-Johnstone called an 'imaginary construction' of the body's form and outline, as rooted not in the dancers' vision but in their tactile-kinaesthetic sense (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 115). In Ana's case, this imaginary form is optically constructed, as it entails long-distance spatial notions of outer form and scale. In Bitzia's case it is haptically constructed, for it entails the idea of a close-range and tactile connection with aspects of the environment.

8.4.3 Diamond Nights: the audience as integral

8.4.3.1 *Organising a 'Diamond Night'*

Diamond Nights are examples of how *Café Reason* attempts to extend their public reach outside the context of classes and workshops. Jeannie first conceived Diamond Nights in 2009.

... my initial idea was to have a chance to perform more, and try out new stuff that didn't fit into a big show ... and to make it a regular bi-monthly

event so we would get into the habit of all coming up with stuff and trying out stuff, but also dusting off old things that deserve to be seen again and maybe re-worked and improved. ...

Café Reason members supported Jeannie's idea, envisioning Diamond Nights as 'an informal platform for sharing new performance ideas, choreographies, experiments, and collaborations' and "to bring uncut performance gems to a wider audience" (www.cafereason.com, accessed on September, 24th 2010). They shared the project with their circle of friends, acquaintances and collaborators.

Wow, that was brilliant', 'what a shame there weren't more people to see that', 'that was as strong as any performance I've seen in quite a while' - So much great material gets created during class and rehearsals which never makes it into the final performance; we thought it was time it did. In order to offer these shining moments to a few more lucky people, *Café Reason* have decided to provide this platform for new ideas and explorations. It is an opportunity for us to share work with other interested artists and friends and to play, experiment, inspire and be inspired, feel uncomfortable, take risks and have fun (*Café Reason* email communication).

Between 2009 and 2011, *Café Reason* Diamond Nights hosted a number of genres including butoh, contemporary dance, video and live drawing projections, poetry and a rich variety of musical forms. Performers included members of *Café Reason* as well as independent dancers, musicians, artists and video-makers from Oxford. In three or four cases some performers also travelled from London to perform at Diamond Night. Audiences are usually composed of performers' acquaintances, friends and families. The pieces are presented to an audience of 20 to 50 people, fit into the limited – yet free – space of the Brookes Drama Studio. The venue is small but well equipped and puts audience and performers very close to each other.

While the concept behind the event emphasises experimentation and showing ‘works in progress’, Jeannie is aware that involving an audience means not only presenting work that is, to a certain degree, ‘polished’ but also making sure that the evening runs smoothly: ‘...it would be quite a tough evening for an audience if it was all a bit dodgy, and counter-productive in the aim of attracting new audiences, etc. Therefore I think we should hedge our bets, and have some stuff we know is really good, and intersperse it with some experiments’ (Jeannie, group email-communication).

However small and informal, the performance event creates new – *on* and *off stage* – relations and practices around the coordination and mise-en-scene of a series of short performance pieces. Two people in rotation deal with the overall organisation of the evening as ‘curators’. These are usually *Café Reason* members or associates. At an early stage, organisation includes: setting a date for the event, booking the space for rehearsals and for the night of the performance; publicising the event among potential performers and audiences via the *Café Reason* mailing list and by word-of-mouth. At a later stage, the organisation includes running the rehearsal slots, soliciting the performers (usually via email) to make use of their assigned rehearsal slots and to communicate details about time-length, sound and technical requirements (lights, projections, etc) of their pieces to the organisers.

Performers’ responsibilities involve, among other things, turning up on time for the rehearsals and the performance, respecting the assigned rehearsal slots, making decisions about shape, content and structure of their pieces and going through the tech run before the evening. While individual performers are responsible for their own pieces, *Café Reason* prepares group performances a few weeks in advance, or sometimes a few evenings before the night. Group pieces usually consist in loose choreographies for dancers to improvise with, usually supported by live musicians.

Performers usually go through a tech rehearsal in order to set lights or sound cues for their pieces. Late decision-making and not turning up at the rehearsals causes disruptions to the organisation and particular discomfort to the lighting person, who is in charge of light design and needs to know what a piece looks like.

Pete, a long-term friend of *Café Reason*, takes on the role of light technician for the night, even though he has no formal training. On performance night, someone is assigned to man the door, collect donations, and direct latecomers to their seats. Someone is assigned to presenting the evening to the audience and the performance pieces. Audience members are given pen and paper to write their feedback on the general organisation of the evening and on the performances: "Pens and paper are provided to all audience members for feedback, so that 1. Any children attending are supported [*sic*] to remain focused and 2. Feedback is immediate and available" (www.cafereason.com – Diamond Night cues). The whole evening is run on a voluntary basis. At the end of the evening donations are split between the technical support staff, performers who travelled a long way to get to the venue, and various expenses.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ There are no set rules for running the Diamond Night but a list of clues has been developed for organizers and performers, which take account of the previous nights. The group has made available a 'checklist' for future events in their website, 'not exhaustive, nor is it meant to be a list of rules to be followed, but it may help as a reminder of what's needed'

(http://www.cafereason.com/resources/diamond_night/diamond_night_clues.txt)

8.4.3.2 *An intimate space*

In her analysis of Hijikata's *butoh*, Kurihara (1996) draws attention to the relationship between *butoh* and small spaces. For Hijikata, the proximity between dancers and audience augmented the intensity of their physical encounter: 'Hijikata was aware that his dance was not suited to a large theater. In the smaller spaces in which he performed, a strong physical tension developed between dancer and spectator' (ibidem, p. 88). Such physical tension was expressed in the terms of a quasi 'tactile' relationship between the audience's gaze and the dancer's body, in which the former was perceived as invasive and even as 'painful,' while the latter was turned into an object: 'The gaze and physical presence of the spectators are metaphorically received as painful. ... This sense [of the audience's gaze as painful] must be internalized within the dancer so that she can attain a body which is an object' (ibidem, pp. 87-88)

Diamond Nights constitute a good example of how *Café Reason* authenticates, in practice, the theory: they like more intimate space because there is a tighter link with the audience. Flavia confirms this by saying that she likes the Diamond Nights because they are small-scale events involving a small audience of familiar faces. She says that she enjoys 'the intimate atmosphere of the Drama Studio and the fact that it is done among friends' (Flavia, personal conversation). A similar appreciation of proximity comes from an audience member's feedback: 'What a great show! I was floored by the amount of effort, heart and soul put into it, and the fresh take with using technology. ... the honesty I could see at close proximity was unreal, inspiring!' (anonymous audience member, Diamond Night feedback form).

Diamond Nights are best enjoyed as a community-based event. The informal, familiar environment of the Drama Studio seems to contribute to this. In one case *Café Reason* moved a Diamond Night from the Drama Studio to a dance

studio made available to them by Pegasus Theatre in Oxford. Though the space provided was arguably a professional one, with a much better floor than the Drama Studio, some members of *Café Reason* noticed that the overall experience was quite unlike the one usually created in Diamond Nights. Jeannie, for instance, observes that in introducing the evening to the audience she did not have the same confidence that she usually exhibits at the Drama Studio. She reflects on the fact that in the Drama Studio, because the space is so small, audience members often have to sit on mats on the floor. To her, that creates a cosy, intimate atmosphere (Jeannie, group conversation).



Plate 15: A 'Diamond Night' at the Drama Studio about to start... (photo: courtesy of Dariusz Dziala)

Ana also remarks that, at the Pegasus, the atmosphere was much more 'austere,' almost 'clinical' (Ana, group conversation) and correlates this with the presence of members of the Pegasus staff – which on that occasion helped with light and sound. She adds that, on that occasion, she missed

Pete being in charge of the lights: 'I think what makes Diamond Nights different from any other scratch night in Oxford is the fact that we have Pete, who adds a theatrical element to the night.' She also says that the use of light is important to her and that she feels most comfortable with constructing a performance by knowing that it will be supported by a light design. 'Without the light setting I would have to construct a piece in a completely different way' (ibidem). This explains why Pete is essential to the group.

In light of Ana and Jeannie's observations, I suggest that what makes Diamond Nights an enjoyable event for *Café Reason* is its enclosed, intimate nature; also, the aspect of experimentation within a relatively solid framework – provided, in this case, by the space and the rehearsed sound and light support – makes Diamond Night an extension of the Friday evening butoh class, with the exception that it includes a small audience and that other artists, friends and relatives are invited to join in, for instance by taking part in dance improvisations.

8.4.4 Foolish outings: the audience as accidental

Beeman (2007) argues that performance is 'collaborative behavior' carried out in a safe environment. The 'safety' of the environment depends on the fact that performative behavior is cognitively 'framed:'

The minimal performance frame is one in which agreement exists between an audience and a performer whereby the audience will attend to the enactment and display behavior of the performer. This frame can be as fleeting as an encounter between a passer-by and a street musician, or as elaborate as a lifelong role as a participant in the palace ritual of a royal court (Beeman 2007, p. 278).

Since performative behavior is a special kind of behavior, it has definite boundaries (e.g. *on* and *off* stage) and is governed by commonly understood rules (e.g. the distinction between audience and performers), to which performers and audience adhere for the temporal and spatial duration of the frame (ibidem, pp. 277-278). The awareness of an audience can take different forms in performance; for instance, the so-called strategy of 'breaking the fourth wall' implies the disruption of the conventional separation between the stage and the auditorium, between performers and audience, leading to a more direct involvement or engagement of the audience in the performance (ibidem, p. 278).

In this section I want to present a case in which the boundaries of the performative behavior, as well as its 'rules,' are not immediately clear to an audience. This is the case of 'butoh guerrillas.'

While *Diamond Nights* are regular, relatively structured events, butoh guerrillas and street performances are usually one-offs and improvised; they require less preparation from the performers and usually no or little rehearsal. At a minimum, preparation may consist in identifying a theme or sketching a plan of action. In some cases the performers just turn up at the designated location and respond to the environment and to each other. Whereas street performances require asking permission from the local council in order to perform in a public space, butoh guerrillas are unannounced and unexpected:

This is a 'guerrilla' butoh performance: i.e. we are not announcing it in advance, nor asking permission of the venue. We don't want to get ourselves thrown out, if possible, so we must not be too much 'in your face', annoying other guests. We want to be noticed only as something faintly disturbing on the edge of their vision (Ayala, group email).

Although the term 'guerrilla' evokes a surprise raid, harassment or sabotage, the performers are not aiming at disrupting what is going on in the 'normal

behaviour' frame but only at being only 'faintly disturbing.'

[The aim of the butoh guerrilla is] to practice the transition from the normal to the surreal while drawing as little attention to ourselves as possible; to find the focus needed to inhabit our new personality, its peculiar internal world and enigmatic obsessions, without feeling compelled to 'perform' to an audience (Ayala, group email).

The aim of the butoh guerrilla thus is not to make a show or entertain the public, but practicing performative behaviour in a low key and in a situation where the audience is spread out.⁵⁹ The strategy followed by *Café Reason* members for this occasion consists in inhabiting alternative personas ('Fools')⁶⁰, that is, characters affected in one way or another by obsessive behaviour.

8.4.4.1 Sitting at/leaving the table as off /on stage markers

A Saturday evening, at 7pm, eight members of *Café Reason* (including the author) meet at the Freud Café, housed in a former church in Oxford city centre. Past the entrance, framed by two tall stone columns, a vast hall opens in front of us; a long bronze bar runs on the left side; tables are scattered around the space, with people eating and drinking.

⁵⁹ Working towards the theatre performance *Matrix*, *Café Reason* planned to have butoh characters, or 'Fools,' wandering in the foyer before the start of the show and in the course of the interval. In preparation for the Fools, *Café Reason* organised two 'Foolish Outings,' at the Covered Market and at Freud's Café, in the form of butoh guerrillas. The main idea behind these butoh outings is to practice moving while being visible from all sides by an audience.

⁶⁰ The idea of the 'Fools' or alternative personas, comes from a workshop with Yael Karavan (2010).

We also sit at a table, order something – a pizza, glasses of wine – and chat for a while. From time to time, we throw a glance or two at the space around us, imagining possible ways of moving into it. Most of us are aware of the ‘plan of action’ that Ayala sketched and sent through a few days earlier:

... We will ... have a drink and something to eat, then one or two at a time, no more than perhaps three or four in total, we will slip into our characters’ worlds. Everyone else will stay at the table and watch/ignore you. You can either make the shift at our table or from elsewhere in the space, e.g. put your jacket on in the toilets and emerge transformed. The black jackets will be used as a ‘portal’ device, through which, in some way, you enter into your character. If you wish to have some other prop, to use as totemic object, please bring that, too - or of course you can improvise with whatever you find. The change should be subtle, as if the inner neurosis/anxiety/obsession/rapture that you have been keeping inside all this time has taken over your body unawares. After, say, 15-20 minutes (but it's up to you) ‘let go’ of the jacket/character and return to the table (Ayala, group email).

Following Ayala’s instructions, we inhabit our ‘fools’ minimally and at different times. It is important not to disrupt the atmosphere or upset people, and most especially, not to upset the Freud’s staff and get thrown out.

8.4.4.2 Enacting obsessive behaviour

Ayala is the first to have a go. She rises from the table and sits a few feet away from where we are, on a bench. She seems to know what she is going to do already. She has a flower in her hand that she has obviously chosen as her ‘totem’ or prop. She places the flower on the floor and, sitting back on the

bench, she 'interacts' with the flower from a distance. This interaction takes the form of a silent conversation between the two, with Ayala-Fool changing facial expression from seemingly sadness or melancholia to smiles. At one point she slides from sitting to lying on the bench, from lying to stretching her arm out to reach the flower.

As I look around to observe people's reaction, I find that most of Ayala's 'foolishness' goes unnoticed. A group of people are standing in a circle not too far from her, but their backs are all turned towards her, while they are immersed in conversation. After a few minutes Adam goes to sit alone on the steps not far from where Ayala is sitting, and near the group of people. Adam-Fool and Ayala-Fool do not interact, each of them seemingly absorbed in their private world. Two guys from that same group turn around and throw a casual glance at them. However, they do not seem interested enough to turn around and look more intently (they might have simply decided to ignore whatever is going on with those two).

Ana starts from one corner of the room. She faces the wall, and begins by scratching a stain of paint with her finger. After a while, she begins measuring the wall by extending her arms in all their length, in the meanwhile keeping moving to one side, parallel to the wall. She stops from time to time, to observe a specific point that she then scratches with her finger. As Ana passes next to a couple of tables, people turn their heads to watch, and then look at each other questioningly. Ana's 'obsession' is indeed more 'explicit' than the others in that it involves crossing the length of the room, as opposed to just staying in one place. It is also more definite. The 'boundaries' of her behaviour are clearly stated, spatially, as well as temporally: she never moves too far from the wall, but moves in parallel to it; also, she always repeats the same set of movements: extending her arms at her sides, moving her head and her eyes as if actively 'measuring,' stopping for a second to scratch a spot on the wall.

As Ana has arrived half way through, a man approaches her. From my point of observation (I am still sitting at the table) he looks pretty serious, and I worry that he might a member of the staff who is getting annoyed by her behaviour. After a few moments I see that the two are talking, him smiling and turning away, seemingly satisfied by her answer. Later, Ana reports that he asked her what she was doing, and that she replied: 'I am practicing obsessive behaviour for a theatre piece' (Ana, personal communication).



Plate 16: Ana (at the back) 'taking measures' of the wall (photo: Jeannie Donald)

The type of message that Ana gives to the man is what Bateson (1987) calls a *metamessage*, or a 'message about a message.' Metamessages constitute a level of abstraction where 'the subject of discourse is the relationship between the speakers,' as in the sentence: 'This is play' (ibidem, p. 178). Metamessages help in activities such as games or art contexts, in that they give people a cue about a certain behaviour which might otherwise appear

'out of context' and difficult to decipher (Small 1998, p. 58).⁶¹

The 'performative behaviour' we are engaging in as Fools involves 'being lost in our private worlds' and not making any effort to entertain an audience, which means that no clear cue for the frame 'performance' is given to the people who are there as an accidental, unaware audience. Ana's metamessage is the first cue for 'performance' that she granted to the curious man who approached her, in that she used the word 'theatre' in her sentence.

Most people appear, at first, at a loss about what is going on. Yet after some time has passed and the rest of us (me, Jeannie, Bitzia and Paul) have taken turns in enacting obsessive behaviours, spreading around the whole space, the 'game' has become clear to most. The atmosphere at Freud's is still relaxed and people look on with curiosity, laughing at, as well as ignoring, or pretending to ignore what is going on around them. Some customers and staff even interact with us: they talk to us, ask questions, take pictures, and even offer slices of pizza, a relaxed behaviour that might be justified by the fact that we are in the middle of a university town, and in what seems largely a student hangout. To the extent that people recognise the 'rules' of the game and interact in a variety of ways, this accidental audience can be seen as 'breaking the fourth wall,' that is, breaking the separation between audience and performers, participating in and playing along with the performative situation (Beeman 2007). One example stands in for all the others. At one point a group of girls wearing rabbit ears headbands and fancy dresses arrives and sits at a table not too far from where we are sitting. They soon notice the strange people lost in their own worlds: at first they chuckle, then

⁶¹ Small (1998) remarks: 'the fact that certain behaviours take place in a church, a football stadium, a theatre, or a concert hall will make it possible to interpret those behaviours correctly when they might otherwise be inexplicable' (ibidem, p. 58).

they take pictures; finally one of them stands up and boldly walks away from the table, to sit next to Adam, on the steps. Her friends happily take pictures of her. The girl stays with Adam for a while, maybe talking to him, while Adam stays in his persona. Finally, one of them comes to the table where the rest of us are sitting, asking information about what we are doing, saying that they 'love what we are doing' and that they are trying to do 'something similar' by hanging out all dressed up and wearing rabbit ears.

It seems that in a place like Oxford where the practice of dressing-up and theme-parties is quite common among students, performances are not conceived as something necessarily 'extreme' or radical. The group of girls also intended to disrupt the 'normal behaviour' frame of a Saturday evening at Freud's. The difference between those girls and the butoh group is that whereas the former attempted to shift persona by wearing fancy dresses, *Café Reason* members attempted to shift persona by more deliberately altering their physical behaviour, as I shall describe in the next section.

8.4.4.3 Obsessive behavior as 'tempo'

Earlier in this chapter I argued that Ortuzar's strategy of improvisation consisted in limiting the number of environmental inputs by focusing on her props and 'shutting out' the audience. Similarly, the Fool's adoption of a particular persona can be seen as a strategy to 'limit' the amount of environmental inputs – multiplied by the fact that the performers were in a public space and exposed from all angles – by focusing on distinctive kinesthetic patterns: the 'obsessive' behavior adopted by the performers allowed them to sustain the uncomfortable situation of performing in an open, unframed environment for a relatively long time, by way of kinesthetic focus onto a relatively monotone behavior.

For Schechner (1985), understanding the 'intensity of performance' includes

understanding how performance uses time and rhythm, 'how a performance builds, accumulates, or uses monotony' (ibidem, p. 12):

Performances gather their energies almost as if time and rhythm were concrete, physical, pliable things. Time and rhythm can be used in the same way as text, props, costumes, and the bodies of the performers and audience. A great performance modulates intervals of sound and silence, the increasing and decreasing density of events temporally, spatially, emotionally, and kinaesthetically (ibidem, p. 11).

In the Fools, performers were not behaving mechanically, or in a choreographed way; rather, they relied on an 'internal score' based on a pre-determined pattern of behavior, an image, or a compulsion which would allow them to persist and, so, maintain a consistency of presence and focus in a relatively unpredictable and unfamiliar environment. 'Intensity' was created by their minimal, contained behavior, as shaped by their 'compulsion' and through interaction with the space.

This altering of bodily behavior can be understood as entailing alternative configurations of rhythm (Lange 1975) and thus, an altered configuration of 'physiological time.' Each performer may adopt a different strategy to create a new 'rhythm.' Flavia, for instance, emphasizes the importance of 'listening' as a basis for her creative process:⁶²

[The creature] 'Air Eater' started from the movement itself; then, by listening to [the movement] happening, letting it be and become, I came to understand its 'being:' what it was in need of, what it was searching for, wanting, and discovering (Flavia, personal communication).

⁶² Freely translated by the author from the Portuguese: "‘Air Eater’ começou pelo movimento, depois de ouvir o andar compreendi la creatura. Do que precisava, buscava, queria, e descobria....' (Flavia, personal communication).

In Chapter Four (section 4.3.2), I extensively illustrated ‘listening’ as focused, intermodal perceptual engagement. In Flavia’s case, such perceptual engagement articulates as kinesthetic receptivity to the body and its environment.

8.4.4.4 The variable of space

Whatever the response of the public, the *Foolish Outings* gave us the opportunity to practice concentration and focus, adopt new personas – understood as different rhythms and patterns of the body – and face different, more challenging configurations of ‘audience’.

The *Foolish Outing* at Freud’s provides an example not only of alternative dynamics audience-performers but also of how such dynamics are affected by context and social expectations of context.

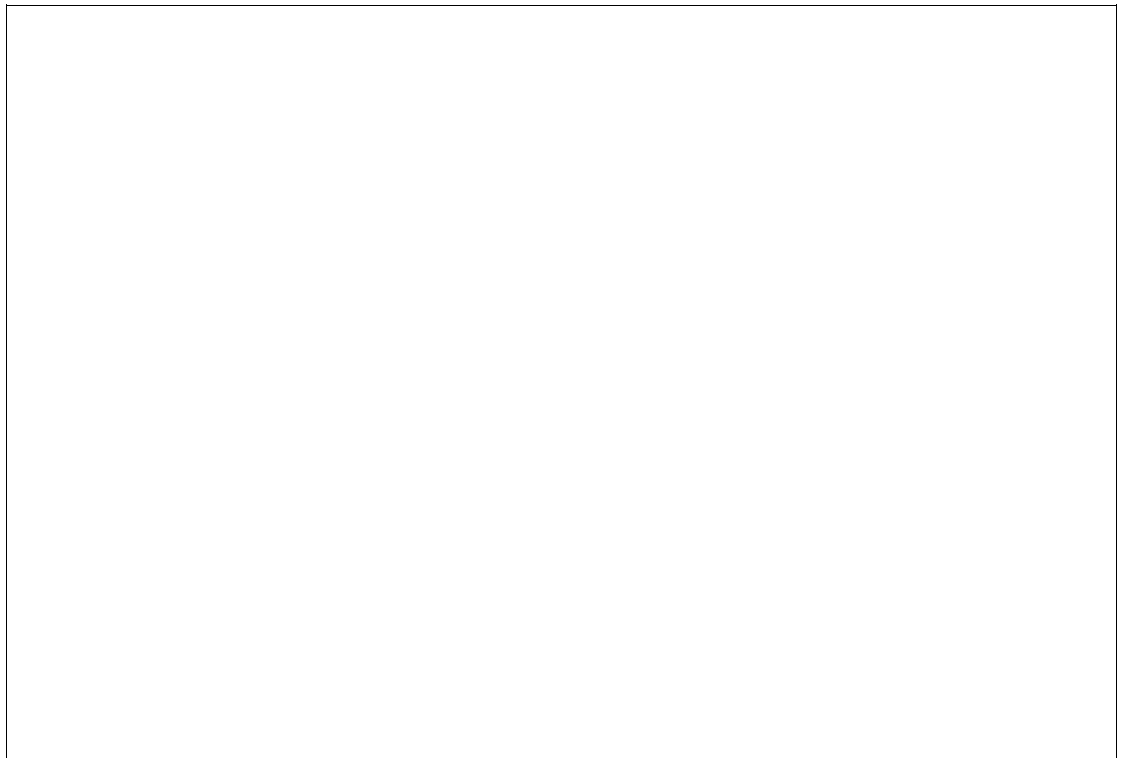


Plate 17: Bitzia, Ari and Paola (behind Ari) as ‘Fools’ at the Covered Market; some members of the public express some interest – from a distance (photo: Ana Barbour)

In other cases of butoh guerrillas, members of the public were not as friendly and relaxed. In a previous *Foolish Outing* at the Covered Market, similar to the Freud's in intent, but different in that some of the performers were actually interacting with people (although minimally), I heard the word 'idiots' being uttered a couple of times by members of the public. Interactions turned out to be more challenging for the performers as well.

A butoh 'flashmob,' performed at Radcliffe Camera Square (commemorating the recent death of butoh master Kazuo Ohno), drew the attention of a few tourists who stopped briefly to watch, before moving on. In this case, the strategy adopted by the performer was to walk from different points of the square to a common point. Most dancers adopted a plain butoh walk while holding a flower for Kazuo. Some members of the accidental audience seemed genuinely interested. However, the word 'idiots' was also uttered in this context, not too loudly but with the purpose of being heard by the performers.

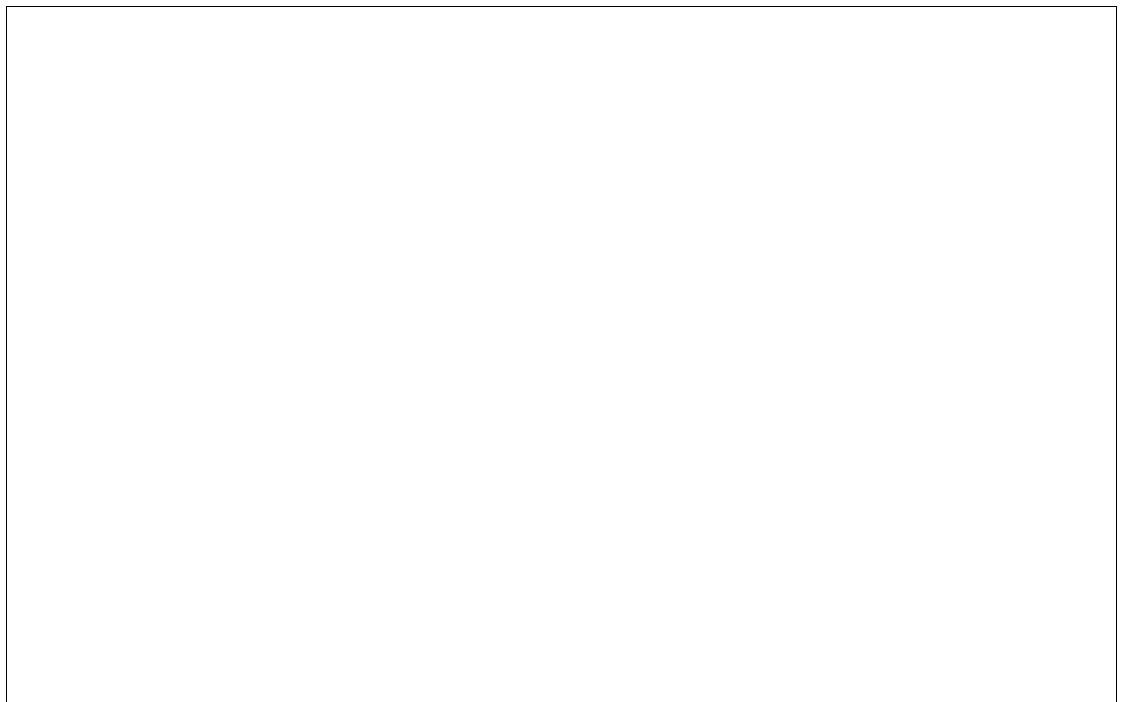


Plate 18: An 'accidental' audience member at the Covered Market: she seems curious but not enough to stop by (photo: Ana Barbour)

Spaces – urban spaces in particular – can be categorised in terms of function, thus mediating the understanding of certain social situations (Small 1998). In the case of Radcliffe Camera the fact that the space is a tourist destination, as opposed to a student hangout, might have affected the reception of the improvisation. People visit the historical side of Oxford, and thus might not be prepared or willing to attend a performance that disrupts their expectations of the place and that does not even qualify as ‘entertainment.’

8.5 Recapitulation and conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed butoh as performance. By combining anthropological and aesthetic analysis I have explored elements that are distinctive to the constitution of butoh as performative artefacts.

In the first section I focused on the notion of the ‘performer-audience encounter,’ which, in performance theory, is accounted for through ideas of multi-sensory, non-verbal, and indirect communication. Based on these premises, I set out to address the ‘aesthetic communication’ in butoh performances.

In the second section, via aesthetic analysis of three different performances, I drew a link between discourses of butoh as ‘other’ and the objectification of butoh’s perceptual patterns into performative elements. For instance, I showed how the butoh technique of ‘isolations,’ by which the dancer leads his or her kinesthetic focus onto distinctive body parts, can be directly related to representations of the butoh dancer’s body as ‘other,’ ‘uncanny’ and ‘liminal.’ I also demonstrated how techniques of de-familiarization of the body, of ordinary objects, and of the sense of time are to be accounted as performative strategies by which butoh dancers manufacture the theatrical illusion of ‘otherness.’

In the third and last section of this chapter I developed the notion, introduced in the previous section, that different butoh performers may relate to an audience in different ways; specifically, I proposed that different settings can affect the performer-audience encounter and its aesthetic configuration. Different cases of aesthetic 'relationship' between performers and audience spanned from one extreme case, at a landscape retreat, in which dancers did not have an audience at all but 'sensorially manufactured' the encounter with a non-human audience of insects, plants and stones, to another extreme case, at a public café, in which dancers and audience were not directly acknowledging, or pretending not to acknowledge, each other.

It has been noted that the prevailing sensory modality connecting audience and performers in butoh, as in any other type of performance, is visual. In the process of creating a performative artefact, such vision may articulate both as optical, e.g. distancing, and as a haptic, e.g. feelingful. While butoh dancers were found to mainly rely on tactility-kinesthesia in their training, haptic vision was found to be a particularly important dimension to butoh performances. In *Diamond Nights*, for instance, the show was enhanced by close, participatory co-presence of performers and audience. Ultimately, the tension between the haptic and the optical, the biological and the cultural, the private and the public, can be understood as the core of contemporary butoh as a contemporary genre, halfway between ritual and aesthetic performance.

CHAPTER NINE

9 Conclusions

9.1 Context, boundaries and approach

This study set out to investigate the contemporary socio-cultural significance of butoh dance in the West. Its main purpose was to find out why butoh, an obscure avant-garde dance phenomenon in postwar Japan, has spread beyond its original context to become a global dance movement. The analysis examined what allowed butoh to consolidate into a genre in its own right, emerging in different socio-cultural contexts from its original source in Japan, while incorporating, and being incorporated into, a variety of aesthetic perspectives. A related purpose of this study was to overcome scholarly representations of butoh that correlate it with the practice of a minority of Japanese masters, especially the founders of the butoh movement, Hijikata and Ohno, since those representations do not do justice to the heterogeneous, multi-cultural nature of today's butoh.

The company *Café Reason* provided a suitable case for an alternative narrative of butoh dancing. While prevalently 'English,' the social and cultural background of the group's individual members was diverse if for the most part Western, and, so, reflected middle-class reality in Oxford, a university town with an international population. To date, *Café Reason* is the only permanent butoh dance company in the UK. Other UK-based butoh dancers, like Marie-Gabrielle Rotie and Paul Henry, work mainly as solo performers or in collaborations with professional dancers or artists from other disciplines. Meanwhile, in other countries, butoh groups may not be as open. For instance, the Swedish butoh group SU-EN is known to be reserved about their

training, and to ask attendees to their workshops not to spread around what they learn.

The research was carried out through my direct participation in butoh dancing and performing with *Café Reason*. The community-based profile of the group facilitated my access to the group itself in the early stages of my research, and my consequent position within it as both a dancer and a researcher. As discussed in *Chapter Three*, I became a *bona fide* member of *Café Reason* by virtue of my genuine commitment to butoh practice, as opposed to the mere pursuit of my research aims with them. The convergence of personal and research aims facilitated the adoption of butoh not just as an object of study, but as a research method in itself. *Chapter Two* and *Three* discussed my methodological approach to the topic, explaining how a kinesthetic trajectory stemmed from the core problem of butoh's formlessness or indeterminacy. That is, because butoh is highly elusive from a formal point of view, I hypothesized that its social significance should be sought at a perceptual level, as articulated in and through the dancer's moving body (Sklar 2000), rather than at a symbolic level (Gell 1999). That is, based on the hypothesis that movement is meaningful in itself, a logic of identification from the point of view of a dancer was deemed not just as desirable but necessary.

While Csordas's paradigm of embodiment (1990) constituted an obvious starting point for an enquiry into the corporeal dimension of butoh dancing, this paradigm was not adopted uncritically in the thesis. As explored in *Chapter Three*, 'embodiment' does not *per se* account for the processual, dynamic and relational intercorporeality of social life (Farnell 1994; Sheets-Johnstone 2011 [1999]). In order to avoid the danger of reiterating, within the paradigm of embodiment, an embalmed conception of culture, an adequate account of corporeality should locate agency within the person, not in either the mind or the body as distinct entities (Farnell 1994). With Downey (2007; 2008; 2010), Farnell (2000) argues that the notion of habitus, on which the

paradigm of embodiment is based, should be integrated with a distinctively relational outlook on culture. Having thus revisited 'embodiment', the thesis tailored it for the particular aims of the research. Thus, embodiment was conceived and methodologically articulated as a kinesthetic (Sheets-Johnstone 2011 [1999]; Sklar 2000) and agent-centred perspective (Farnell 1994, 1999).

As outlined above, insight into the sensory contents of butoh dancing would not have taken place without my own commitment to butoh dancing in the first place. Hence, my use of dance as a research method contributes not only to the anthropology of dance, but also to debate on the relevance of a methodology of the senses in anthropology (Hsu 2008). While accessing the non-verbal in butoh was not without its challenges, enduring such challenges brought unique insight, both from a personal and a research point of view. My account of 'breaking through' into kinesthetic awareness (*Chapter Seven*) stands out as an example of the transformative experiences that contributed to the development of this work, as well as an original case for the extension of the parameters of participant observation into 'radical participation' (Goulet and Miller 2007). The repositioning of the researcher into the role of radical participant, leading to a convergence of anthropological and a butoh dancer points of view, contributes to the debate on integrating performance training into anthropological research, a topic that has been recently engaged in the workshop and seminar series, 'Performing Anthropology', at the University of St. Andrews (2009; 2013), and in 'Anthropology in Dance, or Dance in Anthropology?' at the University of Oxford (2013).

9.2 What is the socio-cultural significance of butoh dance?

Based on the hypothesis that butoh, through its indeterminacy and focus on bodily practice, allows for a reconstitution of the relationship between the senses, movement and the body, the original question giving direction to the enquiry – what is the social significance of butoh dance in the West? – bifurcated into two: why do Westerners do butoh? and, how do Westerners do butoh? This bifurcation reflects the assumption that meaning in butoh is to be found in the dancing itself. That is, the why of butoh is to be discovered in how to do butoh. In the next sections I shall draw from the analyses of the ethnographic material examined in the chapters of this thesis in order to provide answers to these core research questions.

9.2.1 How do Westerners do butoh?

In this section I discuss my findings in relation to aspects of the perceptual constitution and articulation of the butoh body through training. Chapters *Four*, *Five* and *Six* provided evidence that tactility-kinesthesia is the core sensory modality in butoh training, as I shall detail below.

The analysis of *Chapter Four* revealed that butoh teachers used the phrases ‘listen to’ and ‘be aware of’ to prompt trainees to perceptually engage with their immediate environment, their bodies, or with both dimensions at the same time. *Chapter Four* pinpointed how ‘listening to’ (Ingold 2000) was understood, among my participants, as a focused perceptual activity, which is intermodal at its core. The particular ‘goal’ of an activity defined the ‘sensory profile’ of the perceptual engagement itself. For instance, in the account of musician Bruno, his ‘listening to’ my words as we spoke in a busy café, meant that he had to ‘read my lips.’ Due to the intense ambient noise, he had to pay attention to the words I uttered not just aurally, but also visually and

kinesthetically. Meanwhile, in the case of a dancer, Ana, her 'listening to' her body corresponded to proprioceptively directing attention to her own physical condition or state. Finally, a participant's use of a 'listening touch' during a butoh exercise suggested that she was focusing her tactile attention through her fingers and hands.

Also in *Chapter Four*, the discussion of the relationship between butoh and music revealed a link between tactility-kinesthesia and hearing. Butoh dancers' accounts of their relationships with music indicated a convergence of sonic and tactile-kinesthetic values. Butoh dancers were found to respond to the sonic aspects of an environment independent of the agentic production of music. To this extent, the perception of sound was just one facet of an overall perceptual engagement with the environment. In the case of the agentic production of music by musicians, butoh dancers were found to respond to those timbral qualities that specified the physical engagement of the musician with his or her instrument. The example given was the sound of a *shakuachi* flute, as specifying the aural-tactile-kinesthetic encounter between the player and the flute, through the player's modulation of his or her own breath flow in response to the sonic properties of his instrument, in a constant feedback. Ana's use of sound to generate movement qualities also pointed toward an interchangeability of sound and movement.

An equivalent notion appeared in *Chapter Five*, where Bruno told suggestively of how, as a cello player, he related to dancers' movements in the space, in ways that simultaneously engaged hearing, seeing and tactility-kinesthesia. His account as a musician indicated a concerted perception-articulation of sound-movement through his playing, which drew visual and kinesthetic stimulæ from the environment, and returning them in sonic form. The overflow of sound into movement and of movement into sound was further illustrated, in *Chapter Five*, by butoh teachers' use of onomatopoeias – words that kinetically resonated with the reality they refer to; also, in butoh teachers'

spoken modulations of the sound of words during training, in such a way that it underlined the contiguity of the words themselves with the movement of the body in the act of utterance. The corporeality of verbal articulation was further discussed through a parallel between a butoh exercise called gibberish meditation and the ritual practice of glossolalia (Csordas 1990).

The discussion of butoh imagery in *Chapter Four* revealed a synthesis of vision and tactility-kinesthesia into so-called peripheral vision. Different images suggested, through their different emphases on tactility-kinesthesia, different versions of peripheral vision. For instance, images of relocating the eyes in different parts of the body, including 'having eyes on the soles of one's feet,' 'having eyes at the back of one's head,' and 'walking with eyes around the body' indicated a shift from visual to tactile values. More specifically, the analysis of these images corroborated an understanding of peripheral vision as 'integrating' the perceiver with the environment (Pallasmaa 2005). Meanwhile, images of 'having a glass eye on the forehead,' 'fixing the gaze onto a faraway horizon,' 'letting all the light of the room into one's eyes,' and 'having eyes open but not looking' indicated a type of peripheral vision in which the induced blurring of one's visual focus engendered a heightened kinesthetic sensitivity to the environment and the body.

Analysis of butoh exercises in chapters *Five*, *Six* and *Eight* revealed that, in butoh, both haptic and optical codes of vision and tactility-kinesthesia apply. The main discussion of the difference between haptic and optical codes was undertaken in *Chapter Five*. An example of vision as both haptic and optical was found in Bruno's account of his relationship with the dance while playing his cello. His engagement was optical in his attending to 'the shape of the space which is created by [the dancers'] movement, the distance, the emptiness of the space in that distance.' It was haptic in his 'knowledge and attention to [the dancers'] flesh, blood, sinewy nature.' It was both haptic and optical in the 'shifts in [his] focus from the small specific movement to the

larger.’ In the same chapter, the analysis of the watcher’s and the dancer’s engagement in Ana’s exercise with points showed that both haptic and optical codes of vision and tactile-kinesthesia were used.

The notion of a convergence of optical and haptic codes of vision and tactility-kinesthesia in butoh reappeared in *Chapter Six*, which focused on the embodiment of butoh images. There, the practice of ‘watching one’s form’ at the end of the exercise was theorized as a shift from tactility-kinesthesia proper (haptic) into optical tactility-kinesthesia. The contrast between haptic and optical vision and tactility-kinesthesia was further discussed in *Chapter Eight* through an example in which butoh dancers attempted to imagine their own form from the point of view of an audience. Also in *Chapter Eight*, butoh dancers’ preference for performing in small theatres and their use of darkness and semidarkness on stage confirmed their relying on close-up, or haptic, modalities of aesthetic communication, alongside optical vision. This chapter, along with *Chapter Six*, illustrated how the process of embodying a butoh image requires the practitioner to cultivate a double awareness of his or her moving body, which is from the ‘inside’ and from the ‘outside’ simultaneously.

9.2.2 Indeterminacy and tactility-kinesthesia

From the discussion of these chapters, I draw two main conclusions.

The first is that the perceptual constitution of the butoh body is, as hypothesized in *Chapter Two*, indeterminate. Such indeterminacy is a manifestation of the high degree of variation in butoh training exercises, which draw practitioners’ attentions toward changing perceptual configurations. Meanwhile, as butoh training exercises generally share an intensified tactile-kinesthetic profile, indeterminacy may be seen as an expression of the merging of tactility-kinesthesia with other sensory modalities, as suggested by

the interchangeability of tactility-kinesthesia with hearing and seeing, and its relations to haptic and optical encoding. That, within sensory intermodality, tactility-kinesthesia should be seen as prevailing over other senses is in accordance with the notion that the object (Ingold 2000) and context (Stroeken 2008) of one's perceptual attention specify the relevance of the particular sensory configuration. That is, because *butoh* is a form of dance, movement constitutes the focus of a dancer's perceptual activity. Thus, the discussion furthers the notion that, within the same culture, the same sensory modality may be articulated differently depending on the type of practical engagement (Ingold 2000) and the particular setting (Stroeken 2008). It also shows that kinesthesia is not a homogeneous sense, but varies from culture to culture, and within the same culture. This notion contributes to furthering the understanding of movement in the anthropology of the senses and the anthropology of dance. Also, the discussion of the interchangeability of vision with tactility-kinesthesia adds to existing studies of peripheral vision (Bogart and Landau 2005; Pallasmaa 2005; Downey 2007), and to theorizations of the visual sense as a complex, highly nuanced sensory mode (Ingold 2000; Downey 2007; Stroeken 2008).

The second conclusion concerns the aesthetic constitution of the *butoh* body through the haptic and optical encoding of tactility-kinesthesia. That is, 'form,' in *butoh*, is conceived both from the inside and the outside, both optically and haptically. In *butoh*, one sees oneself moving. That *butoh* dance is not just experientially felt but imaginatively and creatively constructed confirms the notion that *butoh* is not merely dance therapy but is a performing art in its own right. The discussion of *butoh*'s transitory 'forming' processes validates and extends Sheets-Johnstone's notion of one's consciousness of the moving body as an 'imaginary construction,' which is rooted in tactility-kinesthesia (Sheets-Johnstone 2011, p. 115). My discussion also contributes to analysis of an experiential gap between visual and kinesthetic learning in the practice of dance, martial arts and related corporeal disciplines (Cox 2003, pp. 90-93).

Finally, throughout the discussion, the distinction between haptic and optical has been extended from the domain of visual arts and architecture to the domain of dance and performance.

9.2.3 Why do Westerners do butoh?

In this section I present findings relating to aspects of meaning-making and semantic resonance in butoh dance, through which I attempt to answer the question, why do Westerners do butoh?

The discussion of chapters *Four*, *Six*, *Seven* and *Eight* provide evidence that meaning in butoh stems from the non-verbal articulation of corporeal and spatial contents, while also showing that butoh movement resonates with the audience and the dancer in distinct ways. 'Emotion' was found to be a recurring dimension in butoh performances, both among dancers and audiences.

In *Chapter Four*, Adam understood some dance interactions in which he was a participant as 'aggressive.' While the dance interactions *per se* simply entailed a reconfiguring of spatial and proxemic patterns among participants, and the intensification of vocal and kinetic/gestural utterances, Adam's own account of his life story disclosed some of the reasons for his propensity to interpret the said behavioral manifestations in butoh training as, in this case, 'aggressive.' In *Chapter Seven*, the change in proxemic relations among participants in Yael's workshop determined a shift in their perceived social role from trainees to performers, to audience members. That change was not just symbolic, but 'actual,' in that participants dynamically embodied the viewpoints associated with those different roles. In the same workshop, the use of random words to trigger the reconfiguration of the performers' bodily hexis revealed, within the relation between word and movement, a dynamic tension

between form and process. Bruno pointed this out, as he noticed that the 'interplay of tying and untying [words and movement]' returned to the participants 'not only the power of holding fixed but, crucially, the power to articulate.' Looking back at his own experience of the same exercise, Adam noticed, in the convergence of the conceptual and the corporeal, an experiential hiatus between performer and audience: 'I found some of the parts of my own dance that came from the most painful memories were the ones that got the biggest laughs.' Meanwhile, he also argued that 'the essentialness of performance' lies in the fact that 'things need to be shared with and received by others in order to be meaningful.'

'Communication' and 'expression' seem to be inherent in a conception of butoh as therapy. In *Chapter Six*, for instance, Bitzia described how, through butoh, she could express the 'ugliness' that takes her over at certain moments: 'You kind of release it, or you share it, you kind of expose it. And then [once I have shared or exposed it], I am back in that wonderful, beautiful space.' Ayala reiterated, in *Chapter Eight*, that the basis for performance is 'Here I am, communicating this to you.' However, to professional butoh dancers 'communication' was irrelevant or even counterproductive to performance. For instance, Morita said that he performed not for the audience nor for himself, but 'for the gods.' For Ortuzar, a strategy of 'shutting the audience out' was necessary in order not to get distracted by them: 'When I am on stage I feel like *I have to* create a relationship with them, that I have to dance *for them*. But that would be a modification of my dance.'

Chapter Six showed that butoh teachers are aware that the modulation of behavioral dynamics – movement, posture, shape – can be used to trigger powerful associations in an audience as well as in dancers, even though, as we have seen, such perceptions seldom coincide. The same teachers used different strategies to exploit the emotional resonance of the moving body for choreographic aims. *Chapter Eight* explored how butoh performers

manipulated the spatio-temporal components to their dances to affect an audience. For instance, Ana's use of repetitive movement patterns in a café, as part of her practicing 'obsessive behavior' for a theatre piece, provoked the curious reaction of a member of the public. That she had to explain to him what she was doing was, once again, symptomatic of a perceptual hiatus between performer and audience. In this case, the hiatus was amplified by the unexpected convergence, in Ana's 'guerrilla' butoh action, of 'theatre' and 'café' as distinct behavioral settings.

The gap between the dancer's intention and the audience's reception was found to be crucial in butoh performances. Butoh dancers extensively adopted techniques of de-familiarization or enstrangement of their bodies, which triggered open-ended associations in the audience. A heightened tactile-kinesthetic focus in the performing of ordinary actions, or in interaction with props, was key to such enstrangement. For instance, in *Chapter Eight*, we saw how Macarena's heightened tactile-kinesthetic interaction with a plastic basin produced in an audience member an altered sense of time.

As for the implications of a tactile-kinesthetic focus for a dancer, the thesis has considered such implications to be perceptual, not conceptual. Thus, in *Chapter Seven*, I gave an account of my own experience of 'becoming the movement' during an intense training session with Yael. On that occasion I came to perceive my own movements as manifold manifestations of an underlying qualitatively-inflected kinetic force, which unfolded through my body but as if independent from my will. Movement became meaning, and meaning movement. That other butoh dancers might have had similar experiences through butoh dancing was inferred, in *Chapter Six* and throughout this thesis, by their conceptualizations of butoh as an expression of 'the unknown,' 'the spirit,' 'the gods,' the 'numinous,' or 'the unconscious.'

9.2.4 Meaning in movement

Going back to the question of the social significance of butoh in the West, the discussion of the sensory and semantic contents of butoh dance validated my hypothesis that butoh's sociocultural significance lies in its core feature of indeterminacy. An agent-centred perspective revealed that such indeterminacy is neither incoherent nor random, but that it is intrinsically supported by an enhanced tactile-kinesthetic logic.

Thus, butoh's indeterminacy lies first and foremost at the level of perception. Far from being spontaneous or natural, butoh's perceptual indeterminacy is the result of patient learning and sensitization processes. It is, suggestively, an enculturation in reverse, through which dancers 'unlearn' habitual movements by learning to attend to their own innate abilities to perceive and relate to the world. We could describe this as a process of perception for its own sake, in which the goal of an action becomes irrelevant as the dancer's attention is caught up in the unfolding of the action itself, and its entanglement in manifold perceptual relations. While intrinsically aimless, such a logic has socio-cultural implications in its suspension of the paradigm of goal-oriented movement and, so, its encouragement of a mimetic opening up to the world.

The semantic indeterminacy of the butoh body may be seen as a byproduct of the dancer's cultivated perceptual indeterminacy. Since the body is above all a medium of communication and interaction, the indefiniteness of an action causes both an annihilation and an expansion of the body as a semantic field. In undermining the finiteness of gesture, corporeal articulation ceases to be 'literal' in butoh. Butoh dancers push the significance of their moving bodies outside the comfort zone of everyday semantics, into the wild of primal – and poetic – articulation.

While my analysis of butoh training has shown that butoh dancers use their bodies to achieve non-ordinary perceptual conditions, the analysis of butoh in performance showed that perceptual reconfigurations of the moving body can also engender multiple significances, which resonate with the dancer's or the viewer's experiences, or both. Context and place play a role in this. Thus, butoh's communicative power lies in its multivocality. The emergence of ever-new significances through the 'unprecedented combinations of familiar elements' (Turner 1982, p. 27) in and through the dancer's body justifies the qualification of butoh dance as liminal, as I hypothesized in *Chapter Two*.

Despite the contributions made by this particular study, more research is needed to fully understand the socio-cultural implications of the butoh sensorium. Further research projects should be conducted to investigate how butoh is learned and taught in other parts of the world, and how other communities of butoh practitioners understand butoh. In particular, the varying configurations of the butoh sensorium through training should be investigated further, in order to assess whether tactility-kinesthesia is, effectively, the prevailing sensory modality in butoh dance. As this study identified tactility-kinesthesia to be a potentially highly sophisticated sense, the range of significances and meanings it may entail should be addressed cross-culturally. Especially, the diverse significances that performers and audiences attach to butoh dancing deserve further inquiry.

Finally, this thesis contends that, by virtue of its very indeterminacy, butoh can be a valuable *method* in researching anthropologically-relevant themes, including, but not limited to, the cultural articulation of emotions. Butoh training and performing could be conducted as part of anthropological training, to sensitize students to the empirical relevance and patterning of movement in social life. Anthropologists trained in butoh would become more kinesthetically attentive to participants' expression of their concerns, values, fears and desires. Butoh's image- and body memory- based modes of

registration would by-pass the obstacle of learning a movement notation system. Butoh training could also be conducted among participants who are willing to articulate aspects of their socio-cultural reality in ways other than the verbal. In sum, butoh in anthropology could reveal aspects of cultural unconscious in movement.

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